



Chairman Baldrige, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding House Bill 445 on behalf of the Ohio Chapter of the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO). My name is Matt Franke and I am the Communications Section Commander for the Butler County Sheriff's Office and serve as the 911 Coordinator for Butler County.

APCO International has over 36,000 members from all aspects of public safety communications. The Ohio Chapter represents the telecommunicators, technicians, supervisors and managers who staff every Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). These dedicated public servants provide that critical link between the public and the emergency responders every hour of every day. Ohio APCO also represents many of the county coordinators who ensure the PSAP Operational Standards are met, and the Wireless Government Assistance Funds are spent appropriately. We are 911.

Ohio APCO has a seat on both of the ESINet subcommittees: the PSAP Operations Subcommittee and the Technical Subcommittee. Our members have been involved in various working groups for the ESINet Steering Committee just as we did for the Ohio 911 Council under the PUCO. We have provided assistance and local expertise to the 911 Program Office in such areas as the RFP review, the PSAP Operating Standards update and the 988 implementation planning. Ohio APCO is committed to improving 911 service in Ohio.

911 has always struggled to keep up with technology. Technology changes so quickly that it is nearly impossible to stay current; but 911 in Ohio is way behind even the most reasonable of expectations. Our current 911 network still operates as it did when introduced in the 1960's. This system is comprised of copper wire lines that are incapable of transmitting the data packets currently used by nearly everyone to communicate with everyone else; everyone but 911 that is.

House Bill 445 would replace the existing 911 network in its entirety with a new IP based fiber optic network. This new network will finally allow us to share more information, such as name and location, with 911; information the public already assumes we receive. The ability to share this data will provide more information more quickly in an emergency. Ultimately, this translates into quicker response times and better informed emergency responders.

HB 445 will do more than just replace our 911 network. It also brings all of 911 under one set of standards, regardless of what device initiates the call or how that call is delivered. Currently, most standards only apply to 911 calls placed by wireless phones. For example, Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) protocols are not required if you place your call from a wireline phone at your home or workplace. EMD has proven to be a life saver in countless situations when a telecommunicator provides specific medical instructions while the caller waits the arrival of an ambulance. It shouldn't matter what phone or device a person uses in an emergency; everyone should receive that lifesaving help.

While the advent of a modern network in Ohio is exciting, it is also somewhat concerning. When you install a completely new network, you have to be cognizant of the fact that you are working with cost estimates and undetermined issues for the counties. 911 systems and PSAPs across the state will have

different challenges to implement a new network. We dealt with similar unknowns when wireless phones were introduced and quickly grew to become the primary method the public uses to call for help. We adapted to the lack of information and location; but it occurred gradually as these phones increased in popularity, and we had time to adjust. The differences with this new network will be more immediate; counties, PSAPs and telecommunicators need to be ready.

With a new system going online statewide with many unknowns, funding becomes an important concern. We know that there will be costs to connect to the network, the so called “last mile”. We also know that some of our existing costs will be eliminated, such as those incurred under the FCC’s King County ruling. But we don’t know the total cost for this new technical platform; at least, not yet. Will the state’s core services provide all the features we currently utilize? What additional costs will be borne by the counties? We also don’t know what the impact will be on our telecommunicators to handle the increase in data. What will be the additional staffing and training needs?

With so much uncertainty, we believe flexibility in funding is necessary. Funding options at both the state and local levels will ensure that we can successfully implement and operate Next Generation 911 throughout Ohio. Some examples and concerns include:

- The funding forecast through the conversion to a Universal Access Fee (UAF) is based upon a consultant’s report. While we do not dispute the numbers, we also understand that it is an estimate and there is no assurance that we will be able to identify and collect from all the devices listed.
- The ability for the ESINet Steering Committee to annually adjust the fee as needed is appropriate given the uncertainty of the costs for both the state and counties. The cap of 30 cents would be temporary and the fee would revert to 25 cents. We believe that flexibility in funding is crucial in guaranteeing that the state is able to build the network and that the counties can connect to it.
- The new technology removes the geographic constraints placed on 911 systems for the past 50 years. Allowing counties to join together to fund a regional system would save on technical and operational costs as counties spread both startup and ongoing costs over a larger tax base while still improving service.
- State law requires that municipal corporations which straddle a county line participate in only one county 911 system, but provides no mechanism to collect money beyond the home county border. Therefore, such systems currently have no effective manner to fund their systems equitably at the local level.
- Until the full extent of core services to be offered is known, counties will not know how much connecting to the ESINet and providing additional services will cost. Planning for those extra costs is vital to successful completion of this transition.

Ohio APCO is hopeful that the committee will consider greater flexibility in funding in order to provide assurances of support throughout the implementation and training phases; and to overcome the diverse set of challenges for each PSAP. Ohio is currently near the bottom of all states in 911 funding, reducing wireless surcharges while most states have increased them. The lower state funding, as well as the limited and sometimes incomplete funding options currently available to counties, has created disparate

levels of 911 service around the state. Next Generation features, including Text-to-911, should be available to all Ohioans.

In closing, Ohio APCO supports the need for a Next Generation 911 system for Ohio. Our comments here are more cautionary than critical. We acknowledge that 911 service, so dependent on technology, will always be required to adapt and change. We support HB 445 as the first step in providing the 911 service our citizens deserve; a 911 service that many of them think we already have.

Thank you Chairman Baldrige and members of the committee for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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