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**Chief Brad Shull**  
**Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association**  
**House Bill 445**  
**House Transportation & Public Safety Committee**  
**May 24, 2022**

Chair Baldridge, Vice-Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee. My name is Brad Shull, and I am the Fire Chief of the Jefferson Township Fire Department here in Franklin County. Thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association (OFCA) in support of House Bill 445.

This legislation accomplishes the important goal of constructing a statewide next-generation 9-1-1 system. I have had the opportunity to represent OFCA as a member of the PSAP Operations Subcommittee under the ESINet Steering Committee. As you have heard from prior witnesses, the ESINet Steering Committee has been working on this important effort for more than eight years.

All witnesses who have testified on HB 445 agree, Ohio's current 911 system has needed an upgrade for a very long time. As Ohioans have moved almost completely away from land-based telephones, our 911 system has not evolved with the changes in technology.

Under a statewide next generation 911 system, as outlined in HB 445, all Ohioans, no matter where they live, would experience:

- Voice and integrated text-to-9-1-1, from traditional and new devices, with the best possible location information, including location data from the device and available geographic information system (GIS) data.
- Calls easily transferred between jurisdictions, with increased collaboration to improve emergency outcomes.
- Significant reduction in the chance that any 9-1-1 call in the State of Ohio will ever go unanswered.

These vital upgrades to Ohio's 911 system would be funded by a 70-cent surcharge assessed monthly on wireless communications or services. This effectively extends it to include all devices capable of contacting 9-1-1, including those involving landline and Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) services.

The fee would be set at 70 cents for two years, and in years three through seven, the Ohio 9-1-1 Steering Committee could adjust the fee annually if needed, with no more than 2-cent increases back up to a maximum of 70-cents. In year eight, the fee would revert to 70 cents and the Steering Committee would provide a report to the General Assembly on the effectiveness of the fee and at what level the fee amount should be set going forward.

As you have heard from prior witnesses, there were real concerns about whether a 25-30 cent fee would be sufficient to successfully implement this system. The Ohio Fire Chiefs shared this concern. The proposed 70-cent fee in the substitute bill will ensure there is adequate funding for the vital work that the State of Ohio and local governments need to do to modernize our 911-system.

The OFCA also supports the existing language to expand a county's 9-1-1 Planning Committee. All disciplines, including the sheriff, fire, and EMS have representation at the technical subcommittee level where the bulk of the work and policy development is accomplished. We believe the language in HB 445 allows for counties to remain structured as they are while providing the flexibility to change if they see fit.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, this is the time to make an investment that I think we can all agree is long overdue. An investment that will modernize Ohio's 9-1-1 system and ensure that every Ohioan, no matter where they live or what device they are using, can get help from a first responder in their time of need. The Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association would like to commend former Rep. Carfagna for taking the lead and introducing House Bill 445 and Rep. Smith for championing it after Rep. Carfagna's departure.

At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions that the committee has.