

Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 128-A

Tina Freeman
Oregon State Police Officers Association

My name is Tina Freeman and I am testifying today in favor of Senate Bill 128-A. I have worked as a police telecommunicator for over 9 years.

My dispatch center is open every day of the year. I am responsible for communicating with police officers, other dispatch centers, federal LEO's and the public. Those communications result from radio calls, direct phone calls to my dispatch center and transferred calls from other dispatch centers.

A typical workday lasts at least 10 hours and during that time, I am responsible for dispatching for an average of 20 officers at the same time. Almost all of those officers cannot hear each other as they are on different radio channels due to their geographical locations. That means several officers can be talking to me at the same time requesting information or relaying information. I am their only immediate link to help if they need it. I am responsible for monitoring and recording all officers' specific locations, vehicles and persons they encounter, and "wants checks", as well as relaying required information back in a timely and accurate manner.

When a wanted person or vehicle is encountered, I have to make phone calls or send messages to other agencies confirming the wanted status on the person or vehicle in question. During that time, I have numerous officers making traffic stops and encounters with the public, as well as other requests for things such as hunting license checks or commercial vehicle movements. Throughout all this I must also keep answering the telephone.

Calls are transferred to my center via other dispatch centers. Many times, these calls involve threat to life or property that is in progress. Usually, these types of calls are "blind" transferred to my center. That means I am transferred a phone call from another dispatch center with no preface to what the call consists of or where the call is coming from geographically. Many times, the callers are at the point of hysterics as they are experiencing a real world crisis. When this happens, I am usually required to give other dispatchers in my center the officers I was dispatching so I can triage the incoming call. Sometimes, this can last for up to an hour as in the case of a domestic violence or other violent call in progress. This transfer of responsibility means that others in my dispatch center now have an increased workload while I work through a resolution on the call I am dealing with on the telephone. This could mean that other dispatchers are dispatching for over 30 officers at a time as well as other functions mentioned earlier.

I have experienced this situation when there were only 2 dispatchers in the center. One dispatcher deals with the critical phone call while the other dispatcher must handle all the officers for the dispatch center as well as telephone calls until the critical situation is resolved. My dispatch center does not have dedicated dispatchers for each radio channel. My dispatch center does not have any way of getting caller ID other than to ask the caller. My dispatch center does not have "ANI ALI", an automatic number identification/automatic location identification. This system relays the geographical location the phone call is originating from as well as the phone number. We are required to ascertain this information from callers who are experiencing emergencies in their lives while trying to get them the needed help.

My career requires my utmost attention for every minute I am working. Lives of my officers and the public depend on it. I am required to listen to numerous people talking to me at the same time, decide which conversation takes top priority and accurately record the required information, as well as remember the identities of the other officers requesting information that I have de-prioritized. I then have to go back through my memory and contact those who were not answered and get the information they were relaying or process their requests accurately.

I see my job as being as equal in difficulty to any other police telecommunicator in the state of Oregon, maybe even more difficult. I don't have the luxury of only having to listen to one radio channel that all my officers can hear. I am not just responsible for working on a single radio channel with no telephone responsibilities. I don't have the technology most other centers have to identify phone numbers or locations where calls are being made from. I deal with life and death calls like other centers without that equipment, while still dealing with the other portions of my job or passing that onto other dispatchers in my center.

I want to thank you for your time today. I would ask that you support Senate Bill 128-A. I further invite you to join me at my job for a first hand experience of what I have spoke of here today.

Again, thank you for allowing my testimony today.