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February 17, 2017

Honorable Brian Boquist, Chair
Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: SB 661 prohibits reallocation of funds from 9-1-1 account

Dear Chair Boquist and Members of the Veterans and Emergency Preparedness Committee:

As the President of Oregon Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) and National Emergency Number Association (NENA), I strongly support Senate Bill 661 on behalf of all of our members. This bill will help ensure that all 9-1-1 tax dollars go toward 9-1-1 emergency services which are critical for public safety statewide.

Every Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) in Oregon relies on the 9-1-1 tax as a significant funding source for daily operations along with funding for 9-1-1 related infrastructure. The PSAP's in Oregon deliver 9-1-1 service along with critical public safety communications to police, fire and emergency medical services. This service is a critical life line for all of our citizens and visitors.

The 9-1-1 tax rate for Oregon has not changed since 1995, although the population of our state has grown by a million residents and the costs of providing services has increased year after year. Additionally the type of technology needed to provide service has changed dramatically. The current tax is not adequate to provide services today so any diversion of funds, regardless of the amount, has a significant impact on a system that is critical for all residents of our state.

Any future collections of 9-1-1 fees could be in jeopardy if Oregon 9-1-1 tax dollars are diverted because of the Federal New and Emerging Technologies 9-1-1 Act of 2008. This act not only could put our state in jeopardy of collecting a 9-1-1 tax in the future but also limit our ability to apply for federal grant dollars. I would urge your consideration on this Act alone as reason to ask the legislation to take pause before looking at diversion of any 9-1-1 tax dollars.

On average, approximately 30% of PSAP's budgets are funded by the 9-1-1 tax. Any diversion of funds could potentially impact this amount adding a larger strain to our local communities.

I urge you to support SB 661.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Toni Sexton".

Toni Sexton
President Oregon APCO/NENA