



Washington County Consolidated Communications Agency

March 8, 2019

Paul Evans, Chair
House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness
900 Court St., N.E.
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support of HB2449

Chair Evans & Members of the Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness,

Washington County Consolidated Communications Agency (WCCCA) is a consolidated 9-1-1 Agency which was formed under ORS190. We provide call-taking and public safety dispatching to all of the citizens and 18 police and fire agencies within Washington County and our response area extends into areas of Multnomah and Yamhill Counties. We serve a population of 589,000 within Washington County today and more than half a million calls are processed through our Center per year. We are the second largest 9-1-1 Agency in Oregon. We provide Emergency Communications System services across Washington and Clackamas Counties, and to the Cities of Newberg & Dundee In Yamhill County.

The 9-1-1 excise tax distribution to WCCCA represents 20% of our dispatch operating budget. Our members pay the lion's share of 70% to make up the difference. As the cost of operating a consolidated communication center continues to rise, the burden continues to weigh heavily on our member agencies, who are trying to provide adequate police and fire services from their budgets as well. They have grave concerns about WCCCA's sustainability if something does not change to increase our revenues. While our population and demand for service has increased since 1995, the 9-1-1 tax has not, and that's a very real problem for the 9-1-1 function in Oregon.

Additionally, with no steady increases to match inflation, the 9-1-1 tax account utilized for purchasing equipment necessary to answer 9-1-1 calls is experiencing a shortfall, something that had to happen at some point given the trajectory of the rising costs and no increases to revenues. This can't continue if we are to provide excellence in 9-1-1 communications across our state. The risks are reduced ability to provide service, more funds needed from our member agencies' budgets to maintain current levels of service, our inability to obtain new technologies to provide for our citizens. Every person in Oregon wants to be able to pick up a phone and call 9-1-1 to get the help they need. Every 9-1-1 agency in Oregon wants to be that reliable for their citizens. The 9-1-1 system cannot fail and we need help to ensure that it does not.

WCCCA supports HB2449 and we ask you for your support to increase the 9-1-1 tax from \$0.75 to \$1.50 per line which can access 9-1-1. We also ask for your consideration in removing from HB2449 the provision that provides 2% to counties with a population of less than 40,000, creating a troubling inequity in the distribution among OR 9-1-1 Centers, even allowing for some to receive up to 300% of their entire budget, while agencies like WCCCA would receive still a small part of their operating budgets. We also ask that you consider reducing the amount for the Oregon Emergency Management 9-1-1 Program from

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4% to 2% and reduce the amount for the Department of Revenue from 1% to .05%. I believe each of those programs work well with the current amount allotted and are in no need of additional funds out of the precious dollars that the 9-1-1 Centers need. In addition, we would request that you consider adding language that specifically directs interest earned on the 9-1-1 tax to be held in an account to be used for future upgrades to our critical infrastructure, known as NextGen 9-1-1.

Clearly, the current tax does not generate sufficient funds for our current 9-1-1 function needs, nor does it provide funding for the future needs of our State 9-1-1 needs. Changes made now, ensuring funds needed for the future of 9-1-1 in Oregon, are critical to serving the citizens of Oregon during the worst times of their lives. HB2449, with the changes we're requesting, will help build a more sustainable model for our emergency communications needs throughout our State. We are here to answer the call.....we're asking for your support to ensure that we are able to do just that.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kelly Dutra, Executive Director
Washington County Consolidated Communications Agency (WCCCA)