

March 12, 2019

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

RE: Support of HB2449

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

My name is Margie Moulin, and I am the Director of Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon (ECSO), which is the consolidated 9-1-1 and dispatch agency formed under ORS 190, and funded by the 9-1-1 tax and our subscriber agencies consisting of police, fire and EMS agencies throughout Jackson County and Crater Lake National Park.

I began my career with Southern Oregon Regional Communications (SORC) in 1991, which, at that time, was one of four (4) 9-1-1 centers in Jackson County. In 1995 when the 9-1-1 tax was passed at .75 cents, every call we took was handwritten into a spiral notebook, and information placed on handwritten case cards, or fire or medical cards. We had a single monitor we used only for finding information for law enforcement. Everything else was done manually. While this was much less expensive, it was also inefficient, and slow.

In 2000, SORC purchased our first Computer Aided Dispatch System, commonly known as CAD, in which all incoming information is entered and immediately sent to the appropriate dispatcher to send help. CAD is also used to find any information needed by law enforcement such as wants and warrants, allows us to track all of our police, fire, and medical responders, and is the primary tool we use to enter all data from 9-1-1 calls and radio traffic.

During this same time period, we upgraded our phones to a modern, computerized system, and implemented software allowing dispatchers to quickly go through emergency medical dispatch protocols to determine response levels, and give pre arrival medical information to callers in order to help to a patient prior to the responders arrival.

All of these technological advances provide faster, more efficient service to citizens during an emergency. These are critical systems that have shaved minutes between the time the call is received, and the information is provided to responders. In our business, minutes, and even seconds can make a significant difference in the outcome of an emergency.

Largely due to these technological advancements, and increases in personnel costs, between 1995 and 2010, SORC experienced a 301% increase in expenses.

In 2010, SORC, and the only other remaining PSAP in Jackson County, Rogue Valley Consolidated Communications (RVCCOM), merged into a single PSAP, becoming ECSO. This consolidation was agreed upon by all parties involved, in an attempt to create even more efficiencies, and streamline responses for our callers in Jackson County. Because both SORC and RVCCOM were medium sized centers, handling all of the 9-1-1 calls in Jackson County, there was not a significant savings involved in this merger.

Since consolidation in 2010, ECSO has seen an additional increase in expenses of 41 percent.

As the expenses have increased, our local public safety partners have been forced to pay higher and higher portions of our budget to meet expenses.

In addition to the increase in technology, we are now facing even more expenses to maintain service levels to our communities due to recent changes in OAR that now minimize the number of our critical systems that are eligible for payment from the 9-1-1 tax sub account designed to cover these expenses.

Currently, the 9-1-1 tax covers only 16 percent of our budget, while our police and fire subscribers provide the remaining 84 percent. These public safety agencies are struggling with their own increases in budgets and are being forced to look for new ways to fund critical infrastructure both at their agencies and at ECSO due to the rise in costs each year to support 9-1-1.

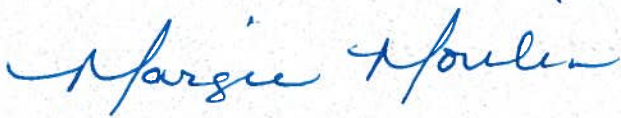
While my testimony today provides information primarily on the effect on ECSOs budget, similar impacts can be seen in PSAPs throughout Oregon. As costs increase to serve our public, we are more and more reliant on our public safety partners in police, fire and ems, to provide sufficient funding for 9-1-1, all while also struggling to fund their own critical needs to serve our communities.

HB 2449 provides for an increase in the tax that would significantly help not only our 9-1-1 centers, but also the public safety subscribers that are currently carrying the largest portion of our budgets.

While I am asking for your support of this increase, I am not in support of the language reflecting a change in the distribution formula, by assigning one percent for counties with a population of 40,000 or more, and two percent for counties with a population of 40,000 or less. This formula creates an inequity in the distribution, and does not provide for adequate increases across 9-1-1 jurisdictions. I am asking for your support of HB 2449, without the one and two percent language.

We are approaching 25 years without an increase in the 75-cent tax supporting 9-1-1, and as you will hear from others around the state, this is nowhere near the cost of providing 9-1-1 service today.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify here today.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Margie Moulin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot above the letter 'i' in "Moulin".

Margie Moulin, RPL, CPE
Director, Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon (ECSO)
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