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Office of the Chief

House Bill 2449 Testimony from Fire Chief Joe Zaludek, Eugene Springfield Fire

- The Eugene Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) has been operating near capacity with over 400,000 calls into the 911 center in 2018 with over 36,000 related to fire and emergency medical services.
- The current State 911 tax dedicated to the Eugene PSAP accounts for 17 percent of the centers operating budget that has not kept up with the staffing or technology needs for the 911 center over the last 20 years.
- Local funding has continued to rise to support 911 center operations to upgrade technology platforms for both the computer aided dispatch (CAD) and regional radio systems in the Eugene and Springfield communities.
- At present over 24 fire departments serving Lane County are using an aging VHF radio system that is rapidly losing effectiveness in the Eugene Springfield metro area. Multiple system failures prevented communications across the county due to loss of power and lack of dependable generator systems supporting the hilltop infrastructure.
- Although we can see the State 700 MHz radio system antennas from the metro area, we do not have the resources to leverage the newest radio technology that will provide mission critical emergency communications for a county population of over 370,000, with 240,000 across the metro area.
- Our Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system is a stable but relatively primitive dispatch system that was deployed over 5 years ago in response to our inability to afford the upgrade and maintenance of a top tier emergency dispatch system.
- Our current capability to meet the needs of our community and to access new technology is severely limited by our reliance on 40-year-old technology and the lack of resources to invest in the equipment and infrastructure replacements needed to provide



Next Gen 9-1-1. This includes many of the advances that can benefit our community, including text to 911, Tele medicine and emergency response management including critical safety and patient information that will be transmitted to responding units.'

- The Eugene PSAP/911 center requires Geographic Information System (GIS) data management upgrades to prepare our CAD system for next generation 911 that includes text to 911, Tele medicine and emergency response management including critical safety and patient information that will be transmitted to responding units.
- With our call volume going up 4 percent annually, we can no longer consider the use of personnel vacancies to help fund the financial shortfalls at the 911 PSAP centers.
- Full staffing is needed to initiate lifesaving Medical Priority Dispatching System (MPDS) protocols that requires that a highly trained 911 dispatcher asks a series of medically related questions to ensure that the appropriate resource is sent to the patient. This includes CPR instructions and assistance with mothers faced with imminent childbirth.
- We are routinely pushing the present 911 infrastructure and all 911 PSAP personnel to their maximum capacity to process every 911 call in Central Lane County. This is especially true during extreme weather events.
- The increase in 911 taxes will help to serve the immediate needs of the emergency responders across the State and continue to serve all Oregonians going into the future as we deploy the next generation of the 911 system and update our radio system to leverage modern State radio system infrastructure.
- In Eugene elected officials are working on a local tax for community safety that will fund an additional 2.5 FTE in the Eugene 911 PSAP to address gaps in 911 PSAP center staffing that sometimes requires mandatory overtime to ensure that every call for emergency service is answered. This willingness to consider a local tax demonstrates the community interest in considering taxes to help maintain and improve the critical services delivered by 911 PSAP center in Lane County.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, this tax increase will measurably improve our ability to respond in our community beginning this year and will dramatically improve our community's resilience for emergency response including major fire and seismic events in the future. Updating critical 911 center technology infrastructure such as aging phone, radio, and



computer systems will allow our PSAP's to deploy next generation 911 technology across Oregon.



A shared service of the cities of Eugene and Springfield, Oregon