



METCOM 9-1-1

April 22, 2019

Representative Nancy Nathanson, Chair
House Committee Revenue
900 Court St, NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support of HB2449

Chair Nathanson, Members of the Committee on Revenue:

The Marion Area Multi-Agency Emergency Telecommunications (METCOM) center provides 9-1-1 call answering and public safety dispatching for twenty six agencies that serve parts of Marion, Linn, and Clackamas Counties. Additionally our agency provides contracted services for some of our federal law enforcement agencies that respond to emergencies spanning the Siuslaw National Forest along the Oregon Coast from just south of Tillamook to North of Coos Bay and sections of the Willamette National Forest from Lane County north to Marion County.

METCOM answers on average, 3,200 9-1-1 calls per month and is extremely dependent on technology and dedicated communications infrastructure to process each of these calls. The amount of funds distributed to our PSAP from the 9-1-1 tax covers 17% of our operational budget.

The 9-1-1 tax in Oregon has not kept up with inflation and has remained at .75 cents since 1995. HB2449 seeks to increase the tax and helps ensure continued safe operations of our 9-1-1 network in the State of Oregon. The cost of operating a consolidated communication center continues to rise based on fixed operational and personnel costs. We have also seen a tremendous change in technology requirements over the past 20 years, yet we have not had a significant change in revenue needed to fund our center from the 9-1-1 tax nor has there been adequate savings set aside to update our critical, lifesaving infrastructure.

Our agency was recently notified by the 9-1-1 program within Oregon Emergency Management that the 9-1-1 tax will no longer fund some of our equipment that is in use today. This shifts more of the burden of 9-1-1 operations back to our local jurisdictions and means that if we maintain current service levels, our agency will be required to pay for 9-1-1 call taking equipment as well as costs associated with rerouting our 9-1-1 trunks in times of crisis. This shift in resources, previously covered by the 9-1-1 tax creates a direct impact on our local police, fire and medical responders. Our agency is forced to determine if we can absorb the costs previously covered by the 9-1-1 tax, or if we must lower service levels. If we cannot absorb these costs, we will be forced into a situation where calls may need to go into a queue or have a

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significant delay simply because we do not have enough phone positions within our PSAP to answer all calls while dispatching appropriate resources. We will also need to evaluate if we can absorb the monthly costs to have our 9-1-1 calls rerouted in the event our center becomes unusable. If we cannot absorb these costs there would be a significant delay to reroute 9-1-1 trunks should our primary center need to be evacuated. The process of rerouting 9-1-1 calls could take up to several hours leaving citizens within our area with no ability to call 9-1-1. Although we take all precautions to stay within our facility, we must be prepared to evacuate in events like earthquake, fire, chemical spills, or other incidents in which it is unsafe to remain in our primary PSAP.

METCOM requests your support of HB2449 to increase the 9-1-1 tax to \$1.50. Oregon Emergency Management has provided the Oregon Legislature with data that shows this amount is needed just to maintain existing equipment and infrastructure. Any amount less than \$1.50 would still result in cuts to the 9-1-1 program and would ultimately bring inequity to the PSAP's within our state. We understand the challenges facing all of our elected leaders on balancing the needs of our citizens. With that said, there is a basic understanding that in times of emergency, 9-1-1 will be there to get help started. Everyone in this state has an expectation that we will have the right equipment in place to answer their calls for help. The tax has not been raised for 25 years and even with the addition of more mobile devices, the revenue is nowhere near enough to keep up with the expenses and expected changes in technology.

9-1-1 and all public safety agencies need your help to fix this funding gap. We need your leadership to help keep our current systems running and to plan for needed upgrades that are going to be needed.

HB2449 helps ensure a more sustainable model for our emergency communications needs throughout the State of Oregon. We have already seen a shift from the 9-1-1 tax to the local level and need immediate assistance. The increase in HB2449 provides that assistance. Please help us keep our 9-1-1 system safe in Oregon and support HB2449.

Respectfully submitted,



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