



2023

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Central Lane
Communications Center
541-682-2775
atobin@eugene-or.gov

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Vice President
Portland Bureau of Emergency
Communications
503-823-8940
steve.mawdsley@portlandoregon.gov

ERICA STOLHAND

2nd Vice President
Hood River 9-1-1
541-387-4070
estolhand@hoodriversheriff.com

KEITH ENDACOTT

Immediate Past President
Klamath 9-1-1 Emergency
Communications District
541-884-4876 ext. 1
kendacott@kc911.us

DANNELL HOOPER

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Columbia 9-1-1 Communications
District
503-366-6978
dhooper@columbia911.com

SUE SCOBERT

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Lake Oswego Communications
503-635-0252
sscobert@ci.oswego.or.us

DEB ROZEBOOM

CCAM
GeoComm West Coast Office
541-926-2870
541-497-7573 Direct
drozeboom@geo-comm.com

MARK SPROSS

APCO Executive Council Rep.
Marion Area Multi-Agency
Emergency Telecommunications
503-982-2344
mark.spross@metcom911.com

Chapter Website

www.oregonapconena.org

Our Vision: "Embrace a vibrant and growing organization characterized by member support, professional development and stakeholder education."

*OREGON COMBINED CHAPTERS OF:
The Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO)
& National Emergency Number Association (NENA)
PO BOX 2024
SALEM, OR 97308-2024*

February 6, 2023

House Behavioral Health & Health Care Committee
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Opposition to HB 2757

Chair Nosse and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to HB 2757.

The proposed 50 cent tax on phone lines to fund 9-8-8 cannot be supported by Oregon APCO. While we maintain full support of 9-8-8 as a partner in providing mental health support and resources to our communities, and in fact, have dedicated 9-1-1 professionals working with them as they bring this service to fruition, allowing a new tax on phone lines that is not specifically related to 9-1-1 confuses the current straight forward approach that exists in helping to fund 9-1-1.

We believe that supporting a tax as outlined in this bill dilutes our ability to secure future increases that may be needed to augment the acquisition of new technology and/or services. As a federally mandated program addressing mental health and addiction services, 9-8-8 will likely have a significant number of other funding options ranging (but certainly not limited to,) from private insurance companies to grants.

In the past, there have been other attempts to enact similar tax mechanisms added to phone lines in Oregon have been rejected. The examples we have are Life Flight and OHSU's Poison Control Center. Again, while we support the mission of both organizations, we opposed both of those taxes. We feel that adding a 9-8-8 tax falls into that same category.

Our members have fought very hard to keep the 9-1-1 tax whole (solely to fund 9-1-1 emergency communications). Clouding the issue with other taxes or adding them to the existing 9-1-1 tax runs the risk of us losing some or all of that funding. The only other operating funding that 9-1-1 centers have additional to the tax are dollars from our agencies whom we answer calls and dispatch for.

In summary, we support 9-8-8 and the recognition of the mental health crisis we face as a state and nation. What we do not support is any entity encroaching on the tax that we have worked long and hard for repeatedly. We feel that any further taxes or increasing our tax to fund other things is an open invitation for many others to want their piece of that pie and it would risk our ability to successfully continue down the road.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in opposition to HB 2757. We urge the Committee to reject this legislation.

Sincerely,

Anthony Collins, OR-APCO/NENA Legislative Co-Chair
Lisa St. Helen, BOEC, OR-APCO/NENA Legislative Co-Chair