



# *METCOM 9-1-1*

---

March 29, 2023

RE: HB2701

House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans  
Chair Grayber, Vice Chair Lews, Vice Chair Tran, and distinguished committee members:

My name is Tiffany Beck and I have been a Communications Specialist/911 Dispatcher for just shy of 17 years at Marion Area Multi-Agency Emergency Telecommunications (METCOM).

I am writing in support of HB2701. When someone calls 911 we are their first lifeline. We must work accurately, listening to the caller, listening to the background noise of the call, and dispatch the call all while giving lifesaving instructions. At the same time we are handling the call and inputting data in the computer, we are keeping the caller calm. Multi-tasking is a requirement that the common public can struggle with. As dispatchers we excel at this skill set. We help protect police, fire, and medics by giving them precise safety information about what they are responding to. Our daily goal as telecommunicators is to keep responders safe so they have the ability to go home to their loved ones at the end of their shift. A few times in my career that has not been possible. We are an integral part of the emergency services family. I personally believe we have earned the right to have the same retirement benefit as far as years served needed to be with police and fire. This high stress career can take a mental and physical toll.

Having raised my children in this career I can honestly say that when you are told "It's hard on your family" that is an understatement. Just like police and fire we miss school programs, field trips, birthday parties, first day of Kindergarten, family gatherings and holidays. Overtime has become an industry standard because of the nationwide shortage of Dispatchers and ever growing duties that are passed onto dispatch. I cannot remember the last time any agency was fully staffed. Going thru the covid pandemic was not easy on anyone or any agency. We worked right through it with all the challenges it brought to our industry.

Health problems are a real concern in this career choice. Graveyard shift negatively impacts your circadian rhythm. High stress jobs can cause high blood pressure, carpal tunnel, insomnia, PTSD, kidney problems and cancer. These are all concerns I have seen my coworkers and myself go through.

At my console I'm looking at 9 screens. Multitasking including typing and talking at the same time while answering radio traffic is all in a day's work. We work long shifts of 12 hours and the

**MARION AREA MULTI-AGENCY EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

1060 Mount Hood Avenue, Woodburn, Oregon 97071

Phone (503) 982-2340 Fax (503) 982-2375

occasional 16. If the story has hit the 5 o'clock news just know that 95 percent of the time that hit the dispatcher's ear first. I work with the best of the best, handling the worst of the worst! I hope that on your worst day if you ever have to call 911 that you are treated with kindness, compassion, and professionalism.

CPR, gun calls, intoxicated drivers, fatal accidents, kids calling in, mental illness, and the occasional person that calls in with no immediate need and just wants to be heard are examples of what we deal with. We are the chaos coordinators, we take the unmanageable and make it manageable, we give people that little bit of hope when it appears that all hope is lost.

"MY BABY IS NOT BREATHING" are the words that every dispatcher dreads hearing. When calls like that come in we rally the troops. We are giving CPR instructions to a very emotionally distraught caller while dispatching police, fire, and medics. Units arrive on scene and take over care. The dispatcher hangs up the phone not knowing how that call will turn out. Inhale a deep breath and answer the next line. No time to debrief your emotions of what just happened in your ear and what you just sent your responding units to. Dispatchers never forget the screams of a mother begging for help, the voice of a child hiding in the closet because mommy and daddy are fighting, or the elderly caller with chest pain who is alone in their home and after advising them help is on the way their breathing changes and the line goes quiet....

Those are just few of the scenarios that we can face daily. We do not get to see what is going on with our own eyes, however we are affected mentally, emotionally, and physically based on the stress.

The retirement plan is one of the hiring perks. We do have medical, vision, dental, PTO, and sick time. My career choice is an amazing mix of the most amazing adrenaline rush, the feeling of truly being able to help someone in need, and backed by the feeling of being helpless occasionally. I have seen in my career 5 dispatchers retire, many of them put in over 25 years service at dispatch and I have seen more people leave because of the impact it has on their family schedules and relationships. We ARE part of the emergency responder family and it is time that we get the recognition and have the same retirement benefits. Can you imagine giving 5 years of life back to a person? That is essentially what this is requesting. Please help us after we have chosen this career of helping so many others.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and consider the impact that years of service has on each and every person. I do not parent like other parents, and there are roads I don't travel down, I do not watch the news anymore, and rarely get involved in political conversations. I feel this is important topic to myself and our industry. Thank you again for your time and consideration on this important topic.

Tiffany Beck  
C/Specialist  
Metcom 911