



**FRONTIER REGIONAL 911**

**135 S. Main St, PO Box, Condon, OR 97823**

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April 18, 2019

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

RE: Support of HB2449

Chair Nathanson, Members of the House Revenue Committee:

Frontier Regional 911 is a consolidated 9-1-1 center serving police, EMS and fire for Gilliam, Jefferson, Sherman and Wheeler Counties. Our agency proudly answers 9-1-1 calls for all of agencies residing within the 5560 square miles with the exception of the small area that Warms Springs Tribe handles. Frontier Regional 911 dispatches for 4 Sheriff Offices, 1 Police Department, 13 Fire and 8 EMS Agencies. Additionally, we also share responsibility of public safety emergency call processing in assisting OSP, ODOT, Public Works, COIDC and Parole and Probation to move information in the direction appropriate for each particular emergency.

As you know, 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 help ensure continued safe operations of our 9-1-1 network in the State of Oregon. The cost of operating a consolidated 9-1-1 center continues to rise based on fixed operational and personnel costs. Frontier Regional 911 started out as Tri County Communications in 2003 and in 2011 were looking for options to assure the tax monies would continue to support the operation and to stay local. In 2003, when Tri County Communications began its service, it was created by the lesser populated counties of Gilliam, Sherman and Wheeler to provide quality services locally to the citizens and the users residing or traveling within. In 2012, Jefferson County joined with Frontier Regional as a cost saving option, as the 911 tax was no longer able to provide the necessary revenues to support their local 9-1-1 center without raising the user fees to an amount that would be impossible to collect. In 2003 when Tri County started up the 911 dispatch center, we did not have GIS mapping support, no CAD, no RMS, no Texting and our Vesta phone system was basic at best. We currently have all of the aforementioned, which enables the dispatchers to provide a much higher level of expediency to emergent situations and all of which come with a cost.

Our agency has been notified by the 9-1-1 program within Oregon Emergency Management that the 9-1-1 tax will no longer fund some of our basic equipment that we have in use today. This shifts more of the burden of the 9-1-1 operations to our local jurisdictions and means that in order to just maintain our current service levels, our police, fire and medical agencies will be required to pay more for 9-1-1 call



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taking equipment and operations. If we are unable to absorb the costs that have been paid by the 9-1-1 tax, our agency will be forced into a situation where calls may have a significant delay in answering calls simply because we do not have enough call taking positions or telephone lines within our PSAP to answer emergency calls while dispatching responders or worse case, become financially unable to continue to operate. Frontier Regional 911 continues to await funding of our CPE refresh, which was due last year and will more than likely be an additional year out because of the availability the once expected monetary support that came from the 35% sub-account handled by OEM. As a system ages and isn't replaced on a reasonable schedule, we look at the possibility of a catastrophic failure of the system, placing lives in danger. This 35% sub-account once paid for a make busy switch, which enable 9 1-1 dispatch centers to divert calls to another agreed upon agency should a 9-1-1 system failure occur or an incident that overwhelms immediate resources. This once funded technology has been referred to the 9-1-1 dispatch center to either fund or discontinue. Frontier Regional 9-1-1 will fund the switch, but what will be added next as the local responsibility?

Currently the 9-1-1 tax does not have sufficient funds to pay for our 9-1-1 needs, nor does it have enough funds to plan for needed upgrades to the system. 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 to support basic operations. We need immediate assistance to fix this deficit and ensure the 9-1-1 program in Oregon is funded to be that first line of defense for any emergency. We need your help to keep our communities in safe.

Respectfully Submitted,

Renee' Heidy, Director  
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