

## Written Testimony in Support of House Bill 2701

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My name is Ryan Lesly and I am testifying today in favor of House Bill 2701. I have worked as a police telecommunicator for almost 7 years.

I am here today to request your support of House Bill 2701 as I whole-heartedly believe we, as Telecommunicator's, should be considered 'eligible employees', and be included in the retirement benefits as described in House Bill 2701.

Though it is true that police and fire personnel make the first physical, in person, contact with the public, it is a matter of fact that a telecommunicator is the first official responder to the public's emergency. We are the first sign of hope for the person who is on the other end of the call and therefore, we are the only one who is hearing what is possibly the worst day of their lives. Not only are we hearing it, we are also relaying the information via radio or phone to the responding units and partnering agencies. We are obtaining pertinent information that will keep our caller and responding units safe, we are assuring the caller that we are right there with them and that help is on the way. From the time the call comes in, to the time an officer arrives on scene, and beyond, we are continuing to obtain crucial information, all while remaining calm and keeping the caller's attention. Every single thing we do as Telecommunicators is audibly recorded as well as documented through text recording in the call notes. We are required to multi task and remain accurately organized during what may be a high safety risk call. While we are speaking to citizens on the phone, we are also sending our officers in to what may be a very dangerous situation. I hope you can imagine the stress those situations put Telecommunicators under. We are concerned for the safety of our caller, as well as our officers, and most times never get any closure to the situation. Yet we remain calm and composed, as the next critical call is usually right behind this one. The time we have to recover from what might be a very high stress call is sometimes mere minutes. Yet we continue on, just like the police and fire units do, because that is what our job entails.

The likelihood that a telecommunicator will encounter multiple critical, high stress incidences in a single shift is significantly higher than that of a police or fire unit. Telecommunicators may handle several calls, while the responding units are on a single call. There are multiple times during our shifts that we have more calls to handle, than units to send them to. That creates a different kind of stress for the Telecommunicator, coworkers and supervisors, as we then have to decide which call is higher priority than the other.

All of the calls that police and fire physically respond to, telecommunicators audibly, mentally and emotionally respond to, including domestics, shootings, sometimes involving our officers, fires, life changing, sometimes fatal crashes, Telecommunicators are the single lifeline between them and the officers, working a call where there may be

a subject who is pinned in their vehicle, or a mother who cannot get to their baby but can hear them screaming, or a person who is hiding because someone has a gun and then all of a sudden shots are fired. Telecommunicators are the ones, and though our lives are not in imminent physical danger at that exact moment, our whole physical body is feeling the extreme level of high stress it causes as we are physically on the phone with the effected party, listening to every detail as it happens.

A telecommunicator has just as high a probability of developing stress related health illnesses during their career such as: high blood pressure, heart disease, changes in appetite, lack of energy, difficulty concentrating, gastrointestinal problems, asthma and depression. And that is just a short list of physical damages that can result from mental and emotional stress, according to the CDC. Yet, as telecommunicators, just like officers, we continue to show up and be our best for the people on the other end of the line as well as our police and fire units, because at the end of the day, we are truly the first of the first responders and want to be the calm at the other end of the line on someone's worst day.

I want to thank you for your time today and I humbly request that you support House Bill 2701. Additionally, I would like to urge you to join me for a sit along at my place of work, where you will see firsthand what it is that a Telecommunicator does daily. I think you will find that this should be a Bill that is swiftly passed.

Again, thank you for allowing my written testimony today.

Ryan Lesly