

Submitter: Kayla Brenner

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General
Government, and Veterans

Measure: HB2701

My name is Kayla Brenner, I work at Clackamas County Communications (CCOM) as a 911 dispatcher and I'm writing to you in support of HB 2701.

Our job is unique, unpredictable and stressful. How many people can say they have got to help deliver a baby over the phone? One of the most stressful, yet rewarding, calls we can take. To then turn around and take other various calls such as vehicle break-ins or someone reporting credit card fraud, all within minutes of each other.

One incident that I won't forget was in February 2021, one of the biggest ice storms I've experienced since being at CCOM for almost 8 years. It all started with a snow storm that began to melt but was quickly froze over by an arctic air rush that hit our county hard. I was on my weekend when the emergency page went out for extra staffing due to how bad it was getting outside, so I went in to help. As soon as I sat down the 911 and non emergency lines were ringing off the hook. From downed power lines that were sparking near homes, trees blocking the roads, people without power, some people with trees on their homes and all the car crashes due to the snow that turned to ice, for lack of a better word, it was chaos. Oregon City alone got over 1.5" of ice, this is where CCOM is located. After working my first 10+ hr shift of the storm I remember leaving work and my car had at least an inch of ice on it and we still had freezing rain and bad winds as I was leaving work. This was just day one of this storm, the days to follow are the days that most didn't hear about unless it made the news.

We took more calls than I can count about people who were on oxygen and running out and they didn't know what to do. Or didn't have enough portable oxygen to last them until power could get restored. People on life support machines whose batteries had run out and they didn't have any more back ups to utilize. Power was out for several days in the entire county, leading some people to do what they needed to stay warm, without realizing the aftermath of what could come from some of those choices. The calls of people feeling sick and going unconscious started to flow in, some not able to be resuscitated, People were utilizing propane heaters inside of their rooms to try and stay warm not realizing the harm that could come from this. This didn't just happen on one occasion, but multiple. What's even worse to think about is that not everyone had cell service during this time. The morning of day two of the storm I discovered I had no cell service, so what do we do as 911 dispatchers? We go to work. Knowing how terrible of shape our county was in when I left, I knew they wouldn't turn down an extra person to help. I didn't get cell service until I was

about 15 minutes north of my home where I and pages from work started flooding in for emergency staffing.

This is just one out of many incidents I can recall that I've been directly involved in that prove 911 dispatchers are the true first responders. We're the very first point of contact citizens have on their worst days. We walk them through CPR until medical can get there. We calm those who are trying to save a loved one who has just been shot while simulating giving them instructions to render aid to that loved one while they wait for the police and medical to arrive. 911 dispatchers are the first ones our citizens make contact with when they need help, and we do all we can to assist them to the best of our abilities until police, fire or medical can get there and take over.

As 911 dispatchers we're constantly going through a rollercoaster of different stress levels during every single shift. Always on high alert so we're prepared to be there for our citizens and our users on their worst days. It's what we do day in and day out and we do it with grace.