

TESTIMONY OF ELLEN M. WERNICKE
BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON UTILITIES
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2019

Chairman and Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of Johnson County Government in support of House Bill 2084 amending the current Kansas 911 Act, however we DO NOT support the bill with the amended fee from \$1.03 to \$.82. Since implementation of the 911 Coordinating Council's hosted solution it has proven to be an effective and efficient system across the state. However, without amending the current Kansas 911 Act with a fee of no less than \$1.03 future progress is not sustainable, which comes at a cost to the citizens of Kansas. This amount is less than the Legislative Post Audit recommended and still leaves Kansas ranked 19th in the nation for generating the lowest revenue.

Fee Increase

Johnson County Government is not currently on the hosted solution. Johnson County is part of the Mid America Regional Council and operates on a 911 platform common to the MARC region. The 911 fee that is received by our county is used to support our ongoing 911 expenses. The current funding mechanism is not sufficient enough to support 911 capital expenditures and ongoing daily operating expenses of the 911 centers.

Kansas 911 networks and 911 emergency communication systems must continue to be improved to meet the citizen expectations that they can contact 911 with the technologies that they use every day. Future Enhanced 911 systems must also have the capability to transmit digital information and images received from citizens at 911 Centers, to the public safety responders in the field, to incident command centers and to hospital emergency rooms. The cost to continue modernizing our 911 systems in Kansas to address ever changing technology as well as being able to pay ongoing operating and maintenance costs will require additional funding to sustain our operations.

With the \$1.03 fee, Johnson County would be contributing an additional \$.23 above the \$.144 we currently contribute towards providing statewide equality of 911 service in the State of Kansas. While there is some return to the MARC region through statewide GIS, orthoimagery, and other statewide projects, the majority of the additional money is going towards the shared statewide call handling system. There will be cost savings benefit to Johnson County, as an agency in the MARC area, in integrating our ESInet to the Kansas ESInet when we take that step, however, the bottom line is that Kansas is a leader in NG911 and Johnson County is willing to be foresighted enough to share our resources with the rest of the State of Kansas to ensure we stay on the leading edge and have the ability to sustain the system that is currently in deployment. Should the fee be reduced to \$.82, the future of NG911 in Kansas is compromised. Additionally, 59 of the 117 PSAP's in Kansas would be getting less revenue than they do today which includes Johnson County. At the \$.82 fee, all PSAPs will be forced to appeal to their local government for additional funding that would have been available with a fee of \$1.03 as proposed. The result will be, in many cases, increased property taxation for 9-1-1 service.

Johnson County feels strongly that this legislation should move forward to ensure the continued deployment and sustainment of the statewide NG911 hosted solution. The progress Kansas has made with NG911 as a leader in the nation should be recognized and the 2011 legislative mission should be honored. It has enabled the state to move forward versus becoming a state of standalone systems and technology that would result in further isolation, lacks interoperability, increase costs and would put

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those who live, work or travel through our great state at risk. Imagine if you had to call 911 for a loved one and your ability to get quick and accurate response was compromised. I think we can agree that all of us have an expectation that no matter where we are in the state that we will receive the same level of service when we call 911 and that simply won't happen without a standardized, statewide NG911 hosted solution.

Thank you for this opportunity to present this testimony on this critical public safety issue affecting jurisdictions of all sizes in Kansas. I would welcome any questions that you may have of me.

Ellen Wernicke
Director, Johnson County
Emergency Management & Communications
ewernicke@jocogov.org