

**Remarks for the
Senate Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee**

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PENNSYLVANIA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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Senator Baker, Senator Solobay, and Members of the Committee, I am Glenn Cannon, Director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement and discuss House Bill 583 which will amend the Public Safety Emergency Telephone Act relating to 9-1-1 emergency calls.

Pennsylvania's 9-1-1 program has been a success story for years, but it now faces a crisis that threatens its viability and sustainability. In May 2012, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) report entitled: *"Pennsylvania's 9-1-1 Emergency Telephone System: Funding, Expenditures and Future Challenges and Opportunities for PEMA."* I strongly encourage members to read the entire report which discusses the state of the sixty-nine Public Safety Answering Points ("PSAPs" also known as 9-1-1 centers). The report provides a roadmap for fully rewriting the 9-1-1 Act. PEMA stands ready to provide additional details and assist in the rewrite to ensure that help in an emergency is only a phone call away for every Pennsylvanian.

Until we can get to the full rewrite, it is imperative that we consider several short term changes that are in HB 583. Last session, the House passed the exact same bill but it was unable to get through the Senate before the legislative session ended. HB 583 contains three significant changes to the 9-1-1 Act. For your convenience, we have given you a one page “Fact Sheet” about HB 583.

First and foremost is the need to fix the 9-1-1 wireless fund carryover problem. Current law allows that any 9-1-1 requests that are eligible for funding but which are not able to be funded in the current year, to be funded “off the top” of the following year’s appropriation. The cumulative effect of this provision is that by the 2014/2015 fiscal year, the carryover amounts (basically “IOUs”) will be the only thing paid from the fund for that year. These carryover “IOUs” will make the 9-1-1 wireless fund functionally bankrupt. Without the change in HB 583, when PSAPs request funding in 2014, there will be no money available to fund the requests in 2014. In subsequent years, the carryover compounds, so amounts requested in 2017 likely would not be paid until 2020. After a one year transition period, HB 583 eliminates the carryover provision and allows PSAPs to make an application for a current year and receive funding for that year. This will keep the 9-1-1 wireless fund solvent and able to meet the needs of the PSAPs on a yearly basis. Because the law requires that funding decisions be made to the counties by June 1, it is absolutely crucial that HB 583 be signed into law before that date. If it isn’t signed into law by June 1, then we will have a functionally bankrupt fund in 2014.

Second, HB 583 makes a technical change that will allow PSAPs to receive the seventy percent (70%) personnel funding that was contemplated when the law was written. We understand that

PSAP personnel costs have risen dramatically since the 9-1-1 Wireless Act was first enacted, and it is a major issue to be further addressed when we do the full rewrite the 9-1-1 Act.

Third, HB 583 will give PEMA further authorization to foster regionalization of PSAPs as recommended in the LBFC report. The report recommends that in the full rewrite of the 9-1-1 Act, PEMA design the wireless funding formula to encourage such regionalization. PEMA is already helping to develop and implement a Public Safety Communications strategy that will employ regionally based communication networks known as Emergency Service IP networks, or ESInets. This technology can be used in support of multiple functions including criminal justice, emergency management, public health, and homeland security. The ultimate goal is to have a public safety communication system at reduced cost, encourage better utilization of available funds, and promote interoperability among all public safety entities.

Senator Baker and Senator Solobay thank you for your leadership on this important matter. On behalf of Governor Corbett and the twelve million Pennsylvanians we serve, I also thank the members of this Committee for your continued support of PEMA and our partners in public safety across the state. I believe that with Governor Corbett's commitment and your support of our mission, PEMA will continue to move forward and become the premier emergency management agency in the nation.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today and I will be happy to answer any questions that members may have.