

Congress of the United States
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Alan Davidson
Administrator of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20230

August 16, 2023

Dear Mr. Davidson:

Thank you for your federal leadership on 911 issues. We write today to urge the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to follow Congressional intent in the creation of a plan for a competitive grant program to provide 911 call centers and agencies with resources to help 911 professionals address critical training needs.

Congress prioritized the critical training needs of 911 dispatchers last year through the joint explanatory report of Public Law 117-328. In this text, Congress directed the NTIA through the Office of the Public Service Commissioner (OPSC), to develop a plan for a competitive grant program that will provide emergency telecommunications call centers and agencies with efficient resources to address critical training needs, such as training with new technologies and on addressing mental health crises. This language is intended to implement proper resources and training for 911 professionals to respond to emergency situations quickly and accordingly. Grant resources need to help 911 professionals address critical training needs, including, but not limited to, training on new next generation technologies, addressing mental health crises, responding to reports of wildfires, responding to reports of active shooter situations, addressing hostage crisis negotiations, conducting witness interviews, and opioid specific responses.

We believe it is vital to assist 911 operators as they respond to an estimated 240 million calls annually to provide lifesaving emergency services. 911 professionals are a critical part of the emergency response effort and are asked to deal with a large variety of emergency situations and technologies. The job is both increasingly critical and complex. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) studies have shown that their work exposes them to trauma that may lead to PTSD development. For example, the NIMH found that 30% of 911 operators in the study reported moderate to severe anxiety and 18% could benefit from PTSD treatment. During shutdowns across the country, they were considered essential workers and their workload considerably increased in recent years. Congressional language recognizes that dispatchers are critical to emergency response efforts. Thus, it is crucial for the NTIA to develop a plan that will provide essential workforce resources passed in Public Law 117-328.

We appreciate the NTIA's work and dedication towards creating a competitive grant program for 911 agencies and call centers. However, it is necessary that progress is made on the program so 911 dispatchers are given the proper resources they need to respond to critical calls. As the workload for dispatchers continues to rise, effective training remains necessary. For our citizens to receive prompt and efficient care, 911 dispatchers must receive the proper resources as outlined in the legislative language. We are looking forward to the implementation of

Congressional intent by the NTIA, especially as it will greatly benefit the work environment of many 911 dispatchers, ensure a stronger 911 system, and better serve the American public.

Accordingly, please reply to the following questions:

1. How is the NTIA meeting the Congressional intent of establishing 911 Training Grants in order to provide resources that will ensure stronger responses and critical training needs?
2. Is there additional assistance from Congress that may aid in successfully and efficiently aiding 911 Training Grants?
3. What is the estimated timeline of NTIA to complete the creation of a plan for a competitive grant program for 911 call centers and agencies?
4. What challenges have arisen as you work on this strategy and how does the NTIA plan to wholly address this?

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to moving towards the creation of a strong 911 Training Grants program which will help not only 911 calling centers and agencies but everyone in America put in the often-terrifying position of needing to call 911 for emergency help.

Sincerely,



Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Richard Hudson
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
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