

March 19, 2025

Dear Chairwoman Roers and Members of the State and Local Government Committee,

My name is Miranda Jangula, I am the Deputy Director/Operations & Training Manager of State Radio. I am here before you today to speak in favor of HB 1419, including Public Safety Telecommunicators in the Public Safety Retirement Plan. I have been a part of the 911 emergency services community for almost 23 years, 21 of those years serving as a Public Safety Telecommunicator. (PST)

I believe PSTs are deserving of this change because they are the first response to a call for help. There are many people in North Dakota who are alive today due to the quick thinking of a PST, before anyone arrived on scene. Some of these actions include giving Heimlich Maneuver instructions, CPR, first aid to stop heavy bleeding or instructions to a new parent in what to do during and after the out of hospital birth of a child.

These dedicated individuals need to be ready at moment's notice. Unlike responders in the field, they do not get time to think about the situation while enroute. PST's answering the calls or radio traffic need to immediately react to whatever the situation may be. They literally have seconds to save a life. Their decisions affect the safety of those responding to the scene and they are the lifeline of the officers who are alone in a bad situation.

Not only do these individuals have to react with no prompt of what they are going to deal with, they also do not get time to recover after a high stress situation. I once talked someone through the death of their loved one as help was still enroute. Then immediately after, answered a reckless driver call. There is no time to decompress. You push it down and move on to do the job at hand. This is one of the reasons Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is prevalent in PSTs. This scenario is something I had to do hundreds of times during my career and is the same of anyone who has had significant time in this career.

There have been some feelings that have been expressed as to why some are opposed to this change. One was that PSTs are not on scene. I beg to differ. Even though PSTs may not be on scene physically, they are there mentally and emotionally. They picture the rooms people are in and the faces of those they help. I once took a call from a woman who was being actively hunted by her armed husband. I stayed on the phone with her as she hid from him in a closet behind some boxes. I listened to her breathing and softly spoke to her as she hid and waited for help to arrive. Once officers were on scene, she tearfully thanked me for staying on the phone so she was not alone. To her I was there and made a difference.

Another reason given for opposition is that PST are not at risk of being assaulted or killed during calls. Although this is true, they are subject to the physical and emotional harms of PTSD. One of the reasons for asking for inclusion on the Public Safety Retirement Plan is the disability benefit. The chances of a PST needing to utilize these benefits for PTSD continues to grow as technology changes. Not only to PSTs hear people's worst nightmares play out over the phone, but they are also now seeing them as they unfold. Changes in technology are bringing the emergencies to the Communication Center. About a year before I moved into my current role, I took a call from a

frantic individual, who was crying and screaming because his friend was on Facebook Live, and he was going to take his own life. As my team and I worked frantically to get help there, we brought up the Facebook Live feed so we could see what was happening and better inform the responders in the field. I watched in real time as this man took his life while listening to his friend's screams as we witnessed this horrible act unfold. With new technology, this is becoming more common. The PST can now take control of a cell phone camera, with the permission of the user, and watch as events unfold. They are now being put into the middle of heinous acts as they happen.

Not only do these men and women take the risk of going through traumatic events daily and sometimes multiple times in one day, they also give up a lot to give this service just like others within the Public Safety field. They miss holidays with their families, work long rotating shifts, have interrupted sleeping patterns and often suffer from the other physical ailments that come from working a sedentary job. These individuals deserve the same benefits as others within the field for the sacrifices they make and their very important role. They are highly skilled and trained in what they do and play a crucial role in emergency response. Without them, there is no response.

Including PSTs in the Public Safety Retirement Plan would not only help us to retain great employees, but it also helps us to recruit highly qualified people to come and work for us. Having a defined benefit plan is a huge incentive to come and work in such a stressful environment. Currently, all of State Radio's PSTs are on the NDPERS plan. Our most recent hires have stated that this was an important draw for them. For all the reasons I have spoken about today, I ask you to please vote DO PASS on HB 1419 and let these hardworking individuals know that you acknowledge their hard work, sacrifices, and appreciate all that they do.

Thank you!

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