

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2296
Senate State & Local Government
January 30, 2025

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City of Grand Forks, ND

Chair Roers and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 2296. My name is Shannon LaHaise, and I am the Director of the Grand Forks Public Safety Answering Point/911 Center; serving in this field for over 28 years. I would like to express my strong endorsement and appreciation for the framework of this bill that recognizes Public Safety Telecommunicators as first responders. I also wish to address the relevance of the provisions granting the Department of Health oversight of communications between emergency personnel and first responders.

Public Safety Telecommunicators play a critical and indispensable role in emergency response systems. They are the ‘first’ first responder during emergencies. Their responsibilities go beyond simply answering calls—they assess situations, prioritize responses, and provide life saving measures to citizens, while relaying vital information to first responders in the field, often under immense pressure.

This work requires the same level of dedication, training, and professionalism as that of firefighters, paramedics, and law enforcement officers. Recognizing Public Safety Telecommunicators as first responders underscores their value and ensures they receive the support, training, and resources that align with the demands of their role.

While advocating for this recognition, I must also request the reconsideration of the framework of the language in the Second Amendment of SB 2296. The Second Amendment’s provision that grants the Department of Health oversight of communications between emergency personnel and **all** first responders is a very broad statement that could have unintended regulatory consequences. This oversight is already addressed in other sections of the Century Code, which provide comprehensive regulations ensuring effective communication and coordination among emergency response entities.

By recognizing Public Safety Telecommunicators as first responders, it aligns with the reality of their work and the critical role they play in public safety. Simultaneously, by eliminating redundant provisions, such as the Department of Health’s oversight of emergency communications, we ensure that our emergency response systems remain efficient and focused on their core mission—saving lives.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to addressing these critical issues. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,
Shannon LaHaise
Grand Forks PSAP, Director