



# BILLINGS COUNTY

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## Testimony in Support of HB 1419

Good afternoon, Honorable Chair and members of the committee. My name is Kyle Michels, and I am here to speak in strong support of HB 1419, which seeks to add emergency medical services (EMS) personnel and dispatchers to the NDPERS Public Safety Retirement Plan.

Currently, our peace officers, correctional officers, and firefighters are included in this plan, but EMS and dispatch personnel, who are just as critical to public safety, are left out. Adding these essential workers to the plan would not only recognize their invaluable contributions but also help address the ongoing challenges of recruitment and retention in these fields.

EMS workers and dispatchers work under extremely high-pressure conditions, often facing the same dangers and stress as other first responders. They respond to life-threatening situations, provide critical care, and keep our communities safe around the clock. Their schedules are demanding, with long hours, rotating shifts, and the emotional toll of being on the front lines of emergencies.

By adding them to the NDPERS Public Safety Retirement Plan, we send a clear message that we value their service and sacrifice. It also strengthens our ability to recruit and retain individuals in these essential roles. As you know, it's becoming increasingly difficult to find individuals willing to take on the challenges of public safety careers, especially when these positions often come with unpredictable hours and missed holidays. This plan would make a significant difference in making these careers more attractive and sustainable.

Importantly, dispatchers are the backbone of public safety. They are the first point of contact during emergencies, coordinating the response and ensuring the safety of both the public and responders. Without dispatchers, our first responders would be lost. Their role in the public safety family cannot be overstated.

For all these reasons, I urge you to support HB 1419 and ensure that EMS personnel and dispatchers are given the recognition and support they deserve. Thank you and I would stand for any questions.

Kyle Michels, NRP/IC  
EMS Director  
Billings County