

Chairman Roers, Vice Chairman Costaneda, and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Jill Breuer, and I am a Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST) with over 28 years of experience. I am writing to strongly encourage you to vote in favor of House Bill 1419. This bill would include Public Safety Telecommunicators in the North Dakota Public Employees Retirement System (ND PERS) Public Safety Retirement Plan.

I have attended several committee hearings on this bill and heard statements suggesting that PSTs should not be included because we are not physically on the scene of an emergency. While it is true that we do not respond in person, the emotional and mental impact of the work we do is just as significant as that of the responders on the ground. Throughout my career, I have listened to people experience unspeakable tragedies, such as losing a loved one, and been part of some of the most joyous moments, such as helping a parent deliver a child. These experiences stay with you. They do not fade.

There is one call from many years ago that I will never forget. A child, approximately 2 years old, was ejected from a vehicle because they were not properly buckled into their car seat. At that time, I had a child of a similar age. I was training another dispatcher when I took the call, and I immediately dispatched officers and EMS to the scene. Unfortunately, there was little that could be done for the child. I was then asked to contact the highway patrol, but in that moment, my mind froze. I was unable to perform the task. An off-duty officer heard the radio traffic, called me, and calmly guided me through what needed to be done.

After that incident, I made sure my own child remained in a car seat until she was 7 years old. This event, along with others, has stayed with me throughout my career, shaping the way I approach each call. While it may be physically true that we are not on the scene; mentally and emotionally, we are. We must visualize the scene and stay fully aware of everything happening, which allows us to provide the best support for officers, EMS, and fire personnel, as well as ensure public safety.

I have seen the toll that this job takes over time. I am more guarded now, and I find myself avoiding large crowds. Do I suffer from PTSD or other forms of trauma related to my work? It's likely. But despite the emotional strain, I continue in this profession because I am passionate about helping others, and that is why I have stayed in this career for nearly three decades.

Currently, Richland County is not a member of the ND PERS Public Safety Retirement Plan, but there is a possibility it will be in the future. I urge you to vote in favor of HB 1419, as this bill would provide the recognition and benefits that Public Safety Telecommunicators, like myself, have long deserved.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jill Breuer
Richland County Communications/911 Manager