



# VERMONT LEGISLATIVE Joint Fiscal Office

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## Fiscal Note

April 6, 2023

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### **S.139 – An act relating to the modernization of public safety communications in Vermont**

**As Introduced by the Senate Committee on Government Operations<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Bill Summary**

**T**his bill establishes State-level oversight of a statewide public safety communications system, creates the Vermont Public Safety Communications Board, and outlines the Public Safety Communications Modernization Process. The functions of the State’s existing E-911 Board will be transferred to the new board, with expanded oversight to ensure that there is a statewide system of regional dispatch services.

#### **Background**

This legislation follows from the work of the Regional Dispatch Working Group. Act 185 (2022) created the working group and tasked it with providing recommendations for a long-term funding model and estimating the timeline and transition funding needed for a regional dispatch system. The working group found *“that the Legislature should debate whether a public safety communications system should be left to local entities to fund, govern, manage, and control, or whether the State should assume this function. The working group acknowledges that it is difficult to balance the desire for local control with a recognition of the government’s responsibility for public safety. An extension of this difficulty is the application of a single solution statewide with existing well-functioning communication centers versus new systems in development.”*

#### **Fiscal Impacts**

Sec. 3 establishes a funding formula that will, when implemented require annual municipal contributions, but the net local fiscal impact cannot be determined at this time.

Sec. 5 transfers \$11,000,000 GF – appropriated in FY 2023 to the Department of Public Safety for a grant to regional dispatch centers – to the new Public Safety Communications Transition Fund, to be used for the purposes of that fund. The JFC approved \$2,500,000 in November 2022 but expenditure is currently on hold.

Sec. 6 redesignates the E-911 Board, unless prohibited under federal law, as the responsible entity for administering \$9,000,000 of Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) for emergency communications.

Sec. 7 appropriates \$1,000,000 from the General Fund (GF) to the E-911 Board in FY 2024 and establishes 8 permanent classified positions. It’s likely that the State will need to offer further financial support during the transition and while the funding formula is implemented.

#### **Vermont Landscape**

**First Responders:**  
*Hundreds of local entities; many volunteer.*

**Dispatch Services:**  
*40 local and 6 out of state providers; multiple governance structures and funding models*

**PSAP Call Taking:**  
*2 local and 4 regional Public Safety Answering Points.*

***Some VT communities are provided dispatch services by State PSAPs at no cost; recent workforce challenges have stressed capacity.***

<sup>1</sup> <https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/Docs/BILLS/S-0139/S-0139%20As%20Introduced.pdf>