



Central Vermont Public Safety Authority

"Together is Better"



Senator Anne Cummings
Chair Senate Finance Committee

Dear Senator Cummings,

In your consideration of bill H-360, we urge you to include provisions that allow funds to be awarded to municipalities to use broadband services to enhance LMR systems, to plan for public safety communication systems using wireless broadband services.

The Central Vermont Public Safety Authority (CVPSA) Board of Directors is currently undergoing a needs assessment of public safety communications in Central Vermont. The preliminary findings of this study show the current land mobile radio systems for fire departments is seriously flawed. The inability to communicate places our first responders in a dangerous situation. The area Land Mobile Radio (LMR) system is old and deteriorating with crowded traffic on its outmoded delivery system and needs to be updated. This upgrade must include that capability for backhaul of communications traffic, and system redundancy which can be supported and implemented with broadband fiber.

Public Safety will need to rely on mission critical voice communication over land mobile radio (LMR) networks for the near future. However, commercial broadband networks and the FirstNet public safety network must be considered as emerging technologies that will serve fire, police, and emergency medical services in the future. Emerging wireless broad band services and applications will play a key role in the future of public safety communications. It is imperative that an integrated planning process be considered that blends public safety needs with commercial network requirements.

The current Broadband bills do not include funding specifically for public safety communications. Broadband is critical for supporting LMR systems, wireless broadband is critical in future first responder communications systems. Integrated planning is necessary to ensure that local public safety communications systems are built not only for today but for the future. The future includes the use of emerging LTE technologies.

Recent weather and health crises have shown the need to focus on resiliency and integration of cellular coverage for mobile wireless and the potential of public safety communications in our future fiber design. Such comprehensive planning would support the concepts within the S-118 bill that would revive Vermont Telecommunication Authority with a focus on resiliency, integration of 911 and public safety communications.

We urge you to include provisions in H-360 that allow funds to be awarded to municipalities to use broadband services to enhance LMR systems. All future communication systems will need to rely on the same resilient fiber architecture and should be planned in an integrated fashion.

Sincerely,

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Dona Bate, CVPSA Board Chair