



Big Stone County Sheriff's Office

11 Second Street SE, Suite 101
Ortonville, MN 56278
Sheriff: Mark Brown
Phone: 320-839-3558
Fax: 320-839-5980

February 14, 2022

Chair: Representative Mariani
House Committee: Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Finance and Policy
Chair Email: rep.carlos.mariani@house.mn

Chair: Senator Limmer
Senate Committee: Judiciary and Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee
Chair Email: warrenl@senate.mn

RE: Letter of Support for HF 2821/SF 2670

Dear Chair Mariani, Chair Limmer and Members of the Committee:

Big Stone County Sheriff's Office is writing in support of HF 2821/SF 2670. I am writing to urge your support of this important public safety initiative.

Effective radios are the backbone of public safety in the State of Minnesota. Our first responders, firefighters, and law enforcement personnel depend upon them to effectively perform their jobs. Radios save lives and serve every constituent of the State of Minnesota.

Radios that serve the ARMER system are outdated in many jurisdictions. They are costly to maintain and replace. In local government units, where budgets are tight, it is very difficult to plan for the costly process of replacing this critical infrastructure. Local government units would urge the state to fund a grant program that allows for the critical upgrade of radios. We would also encourage a sustainable funding support to support ongoing replacement.

Another challenge to replacement radios is that replacing radios is a direct impact of our local taxpayers. Radios are critical to deploying resources, protecting property and life, and protecting our workers. However, they often get overlooked for replacement because there is no existing funding source.

In Big Stone County, there are 253 radios on the statewide ARMER system, most of these radios are used by our small rural emergency departments. There are five volunteer fire

departments, two ambulance services, two hospitals, two volunteer first responder groups, one police department, Emergency Management department and the Sheriff's Office which includes our countywide dispatch center.

Out of the 253 radios, there are approximately 230 of the radios that were purchased before year 2011, these radios are no longer supported by Motorola and it is extremely difficult to find radio parts or used parts to fix or maintain the radios. Our emergency services departments rely on the ARMER radio system to provide the interoperability between the departments at the local, regional, State, and Federal levels.

The replacement cost for the radios that are at the end of their life expectancy, range from \$2,500 to \$4,800 each, this expense does not include the radio programming or additional equipment, or supplies required to add the radio onto the Statewide radio system. The additional cost will be approximately \$400 per radio. The cost to the emergency services departments and our tax payers is estimated to be around \$690,000.00 over the next five years.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

On behalf of the Big Stone County Sheriff's Office.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark A. Brown', with a long, sweeping underline.

Mark A. Brown
Sheriff