



SCOTT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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April 15, 2026

House Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for HF 4810 and HF 4597 — Public Safety Communications Infrastructure

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Scott County, I am pleased to offer our strong support for House File 4810, the Minnesota Public Safety Radio Communications Funding and Interoperability Act, and House File 4597, which appropriates funding for a unified 911 center awareness platform. These bills address real, pressing challenges in Minnesota's public safety communications infrastructure, and Scott County commends the Committee for advancing this work. We offer the following comments to support the Committee's deliberations.

Scott County Supports HF 4810

Scott County supports the broad vision and long-term structure embodied in HF 4810. The ARMER system is the backbone of public safety communications and emergency response across Minnesota. When it works, no one notices; when it doesn't, there are consequences. After more than 22 years of effective service, the system is now at a critical point: the infrastructure is aging, there is no stable or dedicated long-term funding mechanism, and there is no clear plan for system replacement or upgrade.

Today, ARMER is funded and maintained through a patchwork approach. MnDOT owns and operates the backbone, 911 funds cover much of the system, and counties and cities bear responsibility for portions of the infrastructure and associated costs. Scott County knows this issue firsthand. We own one-half of the Norwood subsystem and pay for its operations, maintenance, and capital replacement, yet we use only 16 percent of its capacity. The system is largely serving statewide and regional users, but the cost falls disproportionately on our county's property taxpayers. This is precisely the problem HF 4810 is designed to solve.

The bill's core reform of eliminating the county mandate to fund ARMER network expansion and establishing a dedicated state funding mechanism through the public safety radio communications infrastructure account is the right approach. Public safety radio infrastructure is a statewide resource that benefits all Minnesotans, and it should be funded accordingly. Finally, the bill's emphasis on interoperability across jurisdictions, regional collaboration, and technical assistance to local agencies reflects exactly the kind of systems-level modernization that public safety communications requires.

Scott County Supports HF 4597

Scott County also supports HF 4597 and the \$1,750,000 appropriation to the Metropolitan Emergency Services Board to develop and implement a unified 911 center awareness platform. The problem this bill addresses is real and consequential: right now, when a 911 call comes into a dispatch center and the emergency is outside that center's jurisdiction, the operator must contact the appropriate 911 center, often by phone. That handoff takes time, which, in emergencies, costs lives. A unified awareness platform changes that. With it, a 911 operator can enter information once and send it directly into the appropriate jurisdiction's dispatch queue: no phone call, no relay, no delay.

The MESB and its PSAPs have been working toward this capability for nearly a decade: commissioning a study in 2017, securing inclusion of CAD-to-CAD interoperability in the 2019–2021 Statewide Emergency Communications Board's strategic plan, and releasing a competitive RFP in 2023 that was not awarded due to costs that exceeded available resources. HF 4597 provides the funding to finally make this happen. The high number of PSAPs in the metro region, and the frequency with which they must coordinate across close jurisdictional boundaries, makes this investment particularly urgent.

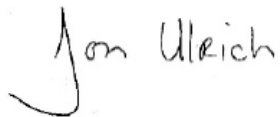
A Statewide Vision

Scott County supports both of these bills as important steps in the right direction, and we want to be clear that our commitment to improved public safety communications extends beyond support for the legislation before you today. We see the investments in HF 4810 and HF 4597 not only as necessary solutions that address real, immediate problems; they are also bridging solutions, laying the groundwork for deeper and broader collaboration across jurisdictions. The stable radio infrastructure funding established by HF 4810 and the dispatch interoperability enabled by HF 4597 create conditions for the kind of shared systems and regional consolidation that produce the greatest long-term benefits for public safety and taxpayers alike.

Reducing duplication, aligning capital planning across counties, and building toward greater integration of dispatch and radio infrastructure are priorities we will pursue in partnership with the state and our neighboring counties. We encourage the Committee to keep that longer horizon in mind as well: the investments made today should be evaluated not only for their immediate benefits, but for how well they position Minnesota to move toward a more unified, efficient public safety communications system over time.

Scott County is committed to working collaboratively with the state, our neighboring counties, and the Statewide Emergency Communications Board to advance public safety communications infrastructure that serves all Minnesotans effectively and efficiently. We thank the Committee for its leadership on this issue and welcome the opportunity to discuss our comments further.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon Ulrich". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jon Ulrich, County Board Chair