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February 10, 2022

Honorable Carlos Mariani
Chair, House Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Finance and Policy Committee
rep.carlos.mariani@house.mn

Honorable Warren Limmer
Chair, Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee
warrenl@senate.mn

RE: Letter of Support for HF 2821/SF 2670

Dear Representative Mariani, Senator Limmer, and members of the committees:

Stevens County is writing in support of HF 2821/SF 2670. I ask for your support of this important public safety initiative.

In addition to qualified personnel, 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Radios that serve the ARMER system are outdated in many jurisdictions.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 method of sustainable funding to support ongoing replacement.

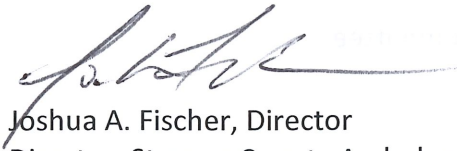
The financial burden that replacing radios presents to local taxpayers is another significant challenge. Radios are critical to deploying resources, protecting property and life, and protecting our workers. However, there is no existing funding source and as such they often get eliminated early in the budgeting process.

In Stevens County, there are 270 radios on the statewide ARMER system. These radios are utilized by local emergency response agencies including four volunteer fire departments, one ambulance service, one hospital, two volunteer first responder groups, one police department, and the sheriff's office which includes our countywide dispatch center and emergency management department. Out of the 270 radios, there are approximately 200 of the radios that were purchased before year 2011. These radios are no longer supported by Motorola and it is extremely difficult to find parts to fix or maintain the radios.

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. Clearly, the financial burden of maintaining our critical communications infrastructure is significant, and the health and safety of our communities is at increased risk because of this burden.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

Sincerely,



Joshua A. Fischer, Director
Director, Stevens County Ambulance and EMS Education