

6

Testimony of

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AGAINST HB# 5490 AN ACT LIMITING THE USE OF EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS

Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan and the members of the Public Safety and Security Committee:

My Name is Francis S. Willett; I am a resident of Durham Connecticut. I am here to testify against **HB# 5490 (AN ACT LIMITING THE USE OF EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS)**

I come before you today as a native citizen of Connecticut concerned about my family, my community, and a certified emergency management professional with relevant experience in the use of both emergency and municipal notification systems.

As the Emergency Management Director for the Town of Durham, we used grant monies to contract with the notification vendor Everbridge for a municipal notification system. In 2007, we launched the Safer Durham Notification system to provide essential information to residents and businesses quickly in a variety of situations, such as severe weather, fires, floods, unexpected road closures, evacuation of buildings or neighborhoods and our annual Durham Agricultural Fair, one of the largest public safety events in the state. The system uses the town's voter registration and tax assessor information and citizen registration as its database. We also have the option thru our Public Safety Answering Point (Valley Shore) to use the CT Alert notification system should we need to send emergency notifications to our residents. The CT Alert system utilizes the E-911 Database as provided by the State of Connecticut and is only used in life threatening emergencies.

In July 2009, the State of CT selected Everbridge as its vendor for the CT Alert Statewide Emergency Notification System. In September 2009, I was hired by Everbridge as their Director of Professional Services. For the past two years, I have been responsible for working with the State of CT Department of Public Safety and many other state agencies, on the first successful statewide emergency notification system.

CT Alert has been successfully implemented in 105 State and Local Agencies. To date the system is able to contact 1.6 million residents and businesses and over 140,000 state employees and public safety professionals in minutes. To date the participating Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP's) have executed over 250,000 broadcasts and delivered over 1.5 million messages to the residents thorough out the state. With CT Alert or any municipal notification system, proper use, continued training and public education is required for any notification system to be used effectively.

It is my professional opinion that the proposed bill is going to hurt many municipalities and how they communicate critical notifications to residents and businesses. Many emergency management agencies and municipal governments use these notification systems to provide life safety and wellness information. Examples of these notifications include, but are not limited to, weather warnings, power outages, senior wellness checks, road closures/extended detours, school and government closings, marina warnings and neighborhood watch notices. The local municipality will continue to be responsible for the proper use of these notification systems. When properly used they provide vital communications to residents and businesses.

Currently, the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security requires all municipalities who use a notification system to have a formal ENS Policy document as part of their approved Emergency Operations Plan that is reviewed annually. During implementation of the CT Alert system, the Department of Public Safety and Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security created an ENS Policy Committee (comprised of representatives from all of the State Agencies and State Public Safety Departments and Local Public Safety Answering Points) The committee created a detailed ENS Policy/Guideline that that defines the proper use of the CT Alert System (See Attached) As you are aware, there are already existing statues that regulate the use of the E-911 Database and any Emergency Notification System that uses it. (Sec. 28-28a).

I respectfully request that this committee to reconsider this bill. I am fully aware of the proper use of these types of systems and when they should and should not be used. These systems greatly depend on the data that is used and proper judgment. If the State of CT E-911 Database is used by the municipality, they must register with the Department of Public Safety (OSET) and a legal agreement and signature on the use of the E-911 database for life threatening emergencies only. If the Municipality provides the database with a resident/business sign-up process, the residents understands that they will be receiving notices for specific emergency and non-emergency uses, the municipality should not be legislatively restricted by the state. Such restrictions will ultimately affect how these municipalities communicate to their constituents during emergencies, early warning/life safety, or non-emergency notifications.

In closing, in many small, rural towns (such as Durham) that are without large local police and fire departments, the townspeople consider this voluntary signup notification system as an investment in their public safety. Restricting the flow of vital information to our residents could hamper their safety and how the emergency services of those towns will communicate to the residents before, during and after an incident.

Thank you very much for your attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Attachments:

CTAlert ENSPolicy.doc

CT ALERT EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM POLICY

March 26, 2010 Version 1

PURPOSE AND SCOPE: The purpose of this document is to provide a general policy on the use and administration of the CT Alert Emergency Notification System (CT Alert ENS). In addition to this policy, each authorized user agency shall set up a more specific written procedure, containing certain minimum criteria including: (1) description of covered entity; (2) message drafting and approval process, and (3) notification flow. For municipalities, this procedure will be added to the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) checklist for the annual review of the Local Emergency Operations Plan. Examples of such procedures are available as templates and best practices. The written procedure of any authorized user agency must be in compliance with this policy.

It should also be noted that an emergency notification system (ENS) is just one means of providing warnings or alerts to the public. The ENS should be used in conjunction with all components of a public warning system as necessary in a particular situation.

ACTIVATION CRITERIA: Title 28 of the Connecticut General Statutes limits the use of the state E-911 database for emergency notification systems to cases of life-threatening emergency. In any given instance, the facts and circumstances particular to that incident will define a life-threatening emergency. There are any number of situations in which public alerting may be necessary. While the determination of whether a matter is a life-threatening emergency is a discretionary decision, the following criteria may help to determine the need to issue an alert:

- *Severity.* Is there a significant threat to one or more individual's life or safety?
- *Public Protection.* Is there a need for members of the public to take a protective action in order to reduce loss of life?
- *Warning.* Will providing warning information assist members of the public in making the decision to take proper and prudent actions to increase safety?
- *Timing.* Does the situation require immediate public knowledge in order to avoid adverse impact to life or safety?
- *Geographic Area.* Is the situation limited to a defined geographic area? Is that area of a size that will allow for effective use of the system, given the outgoing call capacity?
- Are other means of disseminating the information inadequate to ensure proper and timely delivery of the information?

Examples of possible appropriate use of the ENS with the E-911 database include but are not limited to the following:

- Natural disasters such as dangerous water conditions, fires, severe weather;
- Man-made disasters such as bomb threats, HazMat emergencies, terrorism threats;

- Crime situations such as prisoner escapes;
- Search and Rescue situations involving missing children, elderly, other endangered persons;
- Evacuation notices and/or routes;
- Public health threats such as contaminated drinking water, infectious disease outbreaks, rabid animal alert.

ACTIVATION AUTHORITY: Depending on the particular event, an incident commander may include a fire or police official, public health official, emergency management director, emergency medical services chief, or other public safety official who is commanding the management of an incident. Any authorized incident commander who determines that an ENS message needs to be sent may activate the system. At the request of an incident commander, an authorized, trained user (e.g., a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) dispatcher, Department of Public Safety (DPS) State Police Message Center dispatcher, or authorized user at the State Emergency Operations Center) will, using the information provided by the incident commander, initiate the ENS to provide the notification requested. The authorized user shall verify the message with the incident commander or otherwise as needed. The PSAP(s) in the affected area(s) shall be notified of the content of the message prior to initiation of the ENS.

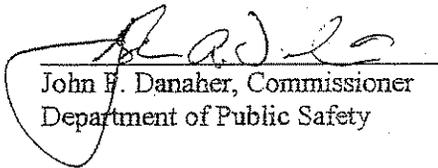
A state agency that determines that an ENS message needs to be sent may also activate the system through an authorized, trained user. Approval of the Governor or his/her designee is required, unless a critical life safety threat is imminent.

NOTIFICATION OF ACTIVATION: The authorized user who initiates the CT Alert ENS shall provide notification of the activation of the system to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Emergency Management Director (EMD) of each jurisdiction affected by the ENS notification as soon as possible after activation. For example, if the ENS message is sent to all or some of the citizens of three municipalities, the CEOs and EMDs of all three municipalities must be notified by the authorized user. This initial notification shall occur from the originating PSAP, or other authorized user, to all PSAPs affected by the activation, and shall include the ENS message. The affected PSAPs shall then ensure that the CEOs, EMDs, Fire, Police and EMS Chiefs in the affected communities are notified of the activation. Each EMD must then notify the DEMHS Regional Coordinator, and any other official appropriate to the incident (e.g., local public health director). The commercial provider of the ENS service shall provide notification of activation of the system to all system administrators, the DPS Director of Fire, Building and Emergency Services, and the DEMHS Director of Emergency Management.

AFTER ACTION REVIEW: After each activation of the CT Alert ENS, the authorized user shall prepare a report detailing who sent the alert, who was alerted, why the alert was sent, and the message that was sent. A template for use in preparing this report will be provided by DEMHS, working with the Office of Statewide Emergency Telecommunications (OSET). The report will be submitted to OSET, and will be

reviewed by a subcommittee of the E911 Commission composed of the CT Alert ENS administrators. The subcommittee will provide its review to the E911 Commission.

The ENS Working Group will convene no later than one year after release of this policy to review the policy for any updates or changes.


John F. Danaher, Commissioner
Department of Public Safety

5/4/10
Date


Peter J. Boynton, Commissioner
Department of Emergency Management
and Homeland Security

4/23/2010
Date

