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Written Testimony in Support of HB 6015

Submitted by:

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Former Mayor City of New Britain

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee thank you for the opportunity to speak with you in support of HB 6015 regarding cities and towns' ability to charge individuals for 911 call responses. I am a former 4-term Mayor of the City of New Britain and bring a unique perspective to your deliberations on the matter of a city's ability to charge a fee for a service that is supposed to be guaranteed by law. Before becoming Mayor I served as a member of the New Britain Fire Department as a firefighter and a Fire Inspector and presently own investment properties in the community which I reside.

Several years ago the Nuisance Abatement laws were passed by this body that allowed cities and towns to attack problematic properties within their communities with a host of tools. Multiple Agency Responses to Community Hotspots were undertaken in conjunction with the Office of the State's Attorney, Local Police, Building, Health, Fire and Zoning officials and had tremendous success in cleaning up properties and illegal situations within the many urban communities in this state. I reference this initiative because of the fact that these laws have been in existence since around the year 2000 and have gone largely unused over the past five years or so.

Some municipalities have attempted to generate revenue for 911 response by members of their public safety communities to situations that automatically require a police officer or fire department response. This slippery slope of attempting to pay for services already paid for by local tax dollars and surcharges on your phone bills with new revenue will have many unintended consequences for both individuals and cities. In New Britain people are already afraid to call the Police department for fear of being charged a hefty sum for their response. A recently enacted law in New Britain will hold the "responsible party" accountable for such responses when a threshold is met. Over 75% of both PD and FD responses within the community are for false alarms. Attempting to hold a property owner responsible for someone

else's behavior shows the ignorance being displayed by people that do not understand the reasons for emergency responses.

Local EMS delivery services already charge for services provided for responses to medical calls and transportation to local hospitals. If cities are allowed to engage this mechanism for Police and Fire responses where will this all lead? Charging back insurance companies when there is a fire at your home? Or how about vehicle extrication only if one produces a credit card to pay for the services? It may sound like a bit of a stretch but the concept of doing this in the first place is a stretch itself.

The bottom line is allowing these types of laws to take effect will not only endanger human life it will change the longstanding traditions of public service and safety to one's community. I urge this committee to pass this bill to not allow cities and towns to charge for services that we all expect to be provided to us a law abiding members of our communities.

Thank you for your time.

Timothy T. Stewart