



**Testimony of Forrest Andrews, President, AFSCME Local 1303-436
HB 6970: AN ACT CONCERNING EMERGENCY SERVICE PERSONNEL
Public Safety & Security Committee
March 12, 2015**

My name is Forrest E. Andrews. I am an Emergency Dispatcher for the Town of East Lyme and President of AFSCME Local 1303-436.

I am writing in opposition to Raised Bill 6970, An Act Concerning Emergency Service Personnel. This bill is troubling to those of who have dedicated our careers to public safety and who believe in providing top-notch, quality public services.

HB 6970, if implemented, would take local control away from communities like East Lyme, Ledyard, Montville, Old Saybrook and numerous other towns across the state with independent PSAPs (Public Safety Answering Points). PSAP facilities operate on a 24-hour basis. They receive 9-1-1 calls and dispatch emergency response services, or transfer or relay 9-1-1 calls to other public safety agencies. (Emergency response services include police, fire and emergency medical services.) The PSAP is the first point of reception of a 9-1-1 call.

Connecticut's municipalities are responsible for ensuring that their residents have 9-1-1 service. Most municipalities in Connecticut operate their own PSAPs, which are housed in police departments, fire departments or emergency communications centers. Municipalities with a population of 40,000 or more receive an annual subsidy from Division of Statewide Emergency Telecommunications (DSET) to offset the cost of PSAP operations.

HB 6970 will hurt smaller towns like ours with a population under 40,000. Remember – local police and fire departments must still be dispatched, regardless of who answers emergency or routine calls. The regionalization of state police dispatch operations created problems that were made worse by inadequate staffing, slower response times, technological issues, etc.

Two weeks ago, East Lyme's First Selectman Mark Nickerson wrote to us and said that he doesn't intend to move our dispatch center out of town "anytime soon, if at all." In his letter, the First Selectman said, "There is a sense of pride in our community that we serve and care for one another. That community spirit is a very special commodity that cannot be bought by a few dollars in savings."

We in East Lyme couldn't agree more. That's why my members and I urge you to reject HB 6970. Thank you considering my testimony.