

Public Safety and Security Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6302

AN ACT CONCERNING THE REGIONALIZATION OF CERTAIN PUBLIC SAFETY EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS CENTERS AND A STUDY
Title: OF CONSOLIDATION.

Vote Date: 3/24/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/11/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Safety and Security Committee
Co-Sponsors: Rep. Jason Rojas, 9th Dist.
Rep. Mary M. Mushinsky, 85th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

In the state of Connecticut, there are an estimated 52 public safety answering points (PSAP) that act as 24-hour 911 call centers which direct calls as well as emergency responders and resources to where they are needed. Many of these PSAPs, however, are only small, low volume emergency communications centers that if consolidated or regionalized, could save the state of CT and those communities money and resources. Regionalization and or consolidation efforts in other states like California, New Jersey, and Texas, have illustrated that not only are call centers capable of serving greater constituencies, but save money as well. In the past, state efforts have been made push this agenda but either none have come through or they have yielded unsatisfactory results. While local towns and municipalities can consolidate on their own, there exist several barriers for them to follow-through on consolidation and/or regionalization endeavors. To expedite effective and cost-efficient PSAP consolidation/regionalization efforts across local and municipalities, this bill is intended to not only incentivize such collaborations servicing populations of 40,000 or more but also to study the means by which consolidation/regionalization is implemented (i.e. review its successes, failures, etc.).

The JFS for HB 6302 removed all language and provisions from the bill that provided any incentive for local towns and municipalities to regionalize/consolidate PSAPs, changed the title of the bill, and shortened the duration of the study.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Mike Muszynski, State and Federal Relations Manager, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM)

The CCM supports this bill. The CCM believes that the study this bill commissions regarding the regionalization of public safety answering points (PSAPs) will craft meaningful recommendations or incentives for establishing a successful consolidation of municipal services. It is, furthermore, the belief of the CCM that if it is determined for an opportunity to realize significant savings in the regional consolidation of PSAPs, state incentives should be considered for upfront costs through a deliberate and thoughtful process.

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST)

COST supports this bill. COST, based on studies, believes that PSAP consolidation could result in: improved quality of service, increased coordination of emergency services, long-term cost savings. COST states that many towns face several challenges in consolidating PSAP including: personnel/labor issues, software compatibility liability issues, the reliance on dark stations, lack of initial start-up funding, lack of community support/loss of local control. COST believes that the task force for consolidating PSAPs ought to ensure that recommendations for consolidation include realistic timeframes for consolidation; a mechanism for resolving personnel, collective bargaining, and other operating issues; create a greater flexibility in determining what constitutes a regional PSAP or multi-town PSAP rather than rigid population and call volume thresholds; and provide support for capital costs in addition to operating costs.

Zak Leavy, Legislative and Political Coordinator, AFSCME Council 4

AFSCME Council 4 supports this bill. The organization believes that the measures implemented would require the Commissioner of DESPP to collaborate with municipal CEO's and municipal public safety leaders to develop a plan for consolidating public safety answering points that would serve populations of 40,000 or above. AFSCME Council 4 stresses its concern about regionalization of services being used to reduce benefits for public employees from where they currently are when regionalization or consolidation is discussed. The organization believes that the inclusion of a representative of the impacted workers to any committee that is developing plans related to regionalization would help instill confidence among affected workers that these meetings are not going against their interests.

Mary M. Mushinsky, Representative-House of Representatives, State of CT

Rep. Mushinsky supports this bill. Rep. Mushinsky believes that consolidation/regionalization of PSAPs as addressed in this bill will ultimately save the money and resources of both the state of CT and municipalities. To support her belief, Rep. Mushinsky cites testimony submitted by the CT institute for the 21st Century submitted for HB 6381 in 2019 which desired a similar affect as this bill. In their testimony, Rep. Mushinsky states that they claimed consolidation or regionalization was one of several areas where the state could restructure the delivery of core services and save up to \$2 billion. Rep. Mushinsky believes that, based

on her comparison of call center operations and call volumes of CT to other states, that regionalization/consolidation of PSAPs is not only cost-effective, but also a feasible task. Rep. Mushinsky suggests that the consolidation of public safety answering points will produce or enable pathways to generate similar results and benefit the state and local municipalities at the same time. Further, Rep. Mushinsky believes that this bill can bring about such transformations and improvements in CT. While Rep. Mushinsky states that existing call center workers need retraining, it is her expressed belief that Connecticut needs to begin the reform process now.

Jason Rojas, Representative, House Majority Leader-House of Representatives, State of CT

Rep. Rojas supports this bill. Rep. Rojas believes this bill will lay down the framework for establish a foundation and put the elements in place for planning and coordination of regionalizing 911 services. Rep. Rojas believes this bill generates a strong incentive to establishing public safety answering points servicing at least 40,000 people that will work to push small, low volume emergency communications centers to regionalize. It is the expressed belief of Rep. Rojas that the improvement of safety can be facilitated through faster response times, increased efficiency of resources, and lowering costs for municipalities.

Rob Retallick, Executive Director, Northwest Connecticut Public Safety Communications Center (NW CT PSCC)

The NW CT PSCC supports this bill. This organization promotes its credibility of its opinion based on the fact that it is the largest regional public safety answering point in CT based on call volume and population. This organization claims, based on its own experiences, that regionalization of communication centers throughout CT can reduce cost to communities while providing a high level of service that is expected from people in need of emergency services.

Francis A. Pickering, Executive Director, Western CT Council of Governments (WCCG)

The WCCG supports this bill but with changes to its language. While the WCCG appreciates the intent of the bill, they believe, based on the studies they conducted regarding regionalization of PSAPs, that the bill's language will not effectively garner the support of communities operating individual PSAPs. It is the belief of the WCCG suggests that improvements could be made to the bills language by altering it to: 1) afford more options for consolidation (eg. virtual); 2) offer greater incentives for regional system consolidation and offer a voluntary buy-in solution; 3) defines objectives more clearly and provides performance metrics; 4) considers standards for CAD/Mobile Systems; 5) considers additional incentives for systems that integrate across multiple departments; and 6) considers GIS/mapping standards.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

Reported by: John Gerke, Intern

Date: 4/6/2021