

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



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STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
3949 DIAMOND HEAD ROAD
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96816-4495

TESTIMONY ON SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 72
URGING THE COUNTIES TO RECOGNIZE 911 EMERGENCY SERVICES DISPATCHERS
AS FIRST RESPONDERS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE JURISDICTIONS

PRESENTATION TO THE COMMITTEES ON:
PUBLIC SAFETY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL, AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
&
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

BY

EVERETT S. KANESHIGE
STATEWIDE INTEROPERABILITY COORDINATOR

March 31, 2022

Chairs Nishihara and Moriwaki, Vice Chairs DeCoite and Dela Cruz and Members of the Committees on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs and Government Operations.

My name is Everett Kaneshige, and I am the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator with the Office of Homeland Security at the State Department of Defense. Thank you for the opportunity for our office to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of S.R. No. 72.

911 emergency services dispatchers play a vital role in partnership with their in-the-field first responder colleagues including police, firefighters, emergency medical services and other public safety personnel. Often these individuals face situations where individuals are in a great amount of distress, harm, fear, or injury. Each of them is called upon to fulfill skills they have learned during extensive training where communications with individuals during a variety of situations means coaching their callers through first aid, collecting important information to relay to officers, and negotiating persons out of difficult situations.

Currently, 911 emergency services dispatchers are usually classified as an office and administrative support occupation. As a result, these skilled personnel cannot be hired at a level of pay and benefits commensurate with their level of training and expertise. This Resolution represents an important first step to urge the Counties to recognize the importance and specialized functions that , 911 emergency services dispatchers perform on a daily basis so that they can receive the compensation, benefits and recognition that they deserve as first responders.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in **Support** of S.R. No.72.

Frank J. Pace, Administrator, Office of Homeland Security, frank.j.pace@hawaii.gov, 808-369-3570

Everett Kaneshige, Statewide Interoperability Coordinator, everett.s.kaneshige@hawaii.gov
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HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-First Legislature, State of Hawaii
The Senate
Committee on Government Operations
Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

March 31, 2022

**S.C.R. 79/S.R. 72 – URGING THE COUNTIES TO RECOGNIZE
911 EMERGENCY SERVICES DISPATCHERS AS FIRST RESPONDERS
IN THEIR RESPECTIVE JURISDICTIONS**

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO supports the intent of S.C.R. 79 and S.R. 72 both of which urge the Counties to recognize 911 emergency services dispatchers as first responders in their respective jurisdictions.

S.C.R. 79 and S.R. 72 appropriately urges the counties to recognize 911 emergency services dispatchers as first responders in their respective jurisdictions. The inclusion of dispatchers not only recognizes the efforts of our hard-working dispatchers who handle crisis situations at all hours of the day, but also honors their invaluable role as the unsung heroes in every emergency. Dispatchers must utilize multiple life-saving procedures and technologies to obtain critical information from a caller to make lightning-fast decisions that could be the difference between life and death for our families and neighbors. 911 emergency services dispatchers deserve this recognition.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.C.R. 79 and S.R. 72.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/29/2022 2:36:28 AM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Azuma Chrupaluk	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/29/2022 8:29:28 AM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Micheal Romo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Emergency Dispatchers are vital to the entire Public Safety Service and our communities. These professionals are often the first person that anyone in need talks to requesting assistance in their time of need. Listening to the emergency, giving life saving instructions, all while remaining calm and assuring the proper emergency response is carried out is a skill set not all can perform.

911 Dispatchers are a vital part of the First Responder Team and should be recognized as such. Please recognize these compassionate professionals for the vital work they do for our communities.

Thank you.

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/29/2022 12:35:55 PM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Mendonsa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

David Mendonsa
2120 Kaohu Street
Wailuku, HI 96793

Hawaii State Legislature
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

TO: Committee on Government Operations & Committee Public Safety Intergovernmental and Military Affairs/ Member(s) of the Hawaii State Legislature

FR: David Mendonsa

Relating to: SCR79/ SR 72 URGING THE COUNTIES TO RECOGNIZE 911 EMERGENCY SERVICES DISPATCHERS AS FIRST RESPONDERS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE JURISDICTIONS

Please support SCR79/ SR 72 URGING THE COUNTIES TO RECOGNIZE 911 EMERGENCY SERVICES DISPATCHERS AS FIRST RESPONDERS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE JURISDICTIONS.

The 911 emergency dispatch personnel are essential to the Public Safety, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Emergency Management, and the response(s) beyond all 911 emergencies. They are the vital link between the community and the responders that are deployed to mitigate all emergencies. All too often, 911 is only heard, but, when a volatile situation arises, they perform. They are always there to answer 911. Their work environment is stressful having to communicate with the reporting party, provide pre-arrival instructions, dispatch response entities, maintain the situational awareness for our response system.

I have seen firsthand how they manage call taking, dispatch units, monitor all response entities and activities. They feel the stress of the caller, medics, police, and fire personnel. There is no rest for them in the tenuous activities of call taking and dispatching. 911 call-takers are not data entry personnel, they are the sentinel forces driving the response of the first response community.

I know the decision is difficult. I am humbled at the opportunity to provide testimony. Please support this initiative for SCR79/ SR 72 (911 emergency dispatch personnel).

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 808-268-0268.

Mahalo Nui,
David Mendonsa, PA-C, Paramedic
Prior-Army Medic & EMS Faculty

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
SENATOR SHARON Y. MORIWAKI, CHAIR
SENATOR DONOVAN M. DELA CRUZ, VICE CHAIR

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL, AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
SENATOR CLARENCE K. NISHIHARA, CHAIR
SENATOR LYNN DECOITE, VICE CHAIR

SCR79 / SR 72

THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2022
AT 03:05 P.M. CONFERENCE ROOM 016/VIDEOCONFERENCE

IN SUPPORT OF RESOLUTION (SCR79/SR72)

My name is Suzette Perreira, and I am an Emergency Services Dispatcher II with the Maui Police Department. I am in support of both resolutions (SCR79/SR72) as I stand by 911 Emergency Services Dispatchers being recognized as first responders. Every day, we take calls where we are the first responder to the call. I have had to walk callers through CPR as they are there with their loved one waiting for Police, Fire, or EMS to arrive. I have had suicidal callers who are at their most vulnerable state and be able to be the calm voice on the other end until Police and EMS arrive. I have had frantic callers who need a calm voice to help them get under control so they can look for their 2-year-old grandson who is missing. This is just to name a few. If this legislation is passed, it would make such an impact on our center. First, to finally recognize us as first responders alongside our fellow cohorts. We have been so understaffed for so long that I feel this bill will help increase staffing issues, as well as increase moral. We are the voices behind 911, we are there whether you call day or night. I love what I do every day.

In conclusion, I am in support of resolution (SCR79/SR72), I certainly believe that Emergency Dispatchers deserve to be recognized as first responders. We go to work every day knowing that we are there to keep the public safe as well as our fellow brothers and sisters that are Police, Fire, and Medics personnel. We have one of the most important jobs. Your consideration to this letter is greatly appreciated.

Mahalo,

Suzette Perreira
Emergency Services Dispatcher II
Maui Police Department
55 Mahalani St. Wailuku, HI 96793
808-281-9002

Committee on Government Operations
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Chair
Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair

Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs
Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Chair
Senator Lynn DeCoite, Vice Chair

Tracy L. Pellazar
Supervisor-Emergency Services Dispatch
Maui Police Department, Communications Section
55 Mahalani St. Wailuku, HI 96793
(808)870-1490

Tuesday, March 29, 2022

Support of SCR 79/SR 72, Urging the counties to recognize 911 Emergency Services Dispatchers as first responders in their respective jurisdictions.

My name is Tracy Pellazar and I'm an Emergency Services Dispatch Supervisor. I have been with the Maui Police Department for almost 19 years now. From the beginning, we have been the main point of contact, the "hub" for all emergencies on the island (and in our county). We dispatch for all Police, Fire, and Medics, as well as answer 911 calls and Administrative Calls. Our workload has never lessened, but actually continues to increase as times change. We work alongside our fellow policemen, firemen, and medics, our shifts overlapping and intertwining. We are, in actuality, "first responders". We are the first contact for any emergency. We are the ones that you and your family speak to first. We too have saved lives, however, our life-saving incidents occur via the phone. We have assisted with giving birth, helped someone give CPR, given instructions on opening an airway, directed someone to a safe area, and much much more. We may not be physically on scene, but we have definitely had a part in these incidents. We do much more than people know, a lot of what we do is behind the scenes, and we are much more than clerks. Several of our training courses, parallel those of our "on-the-road" first responders.

I fell in love with being an Emergency Services Dispatcher from the beginning, and I continue to love my job, and I'm considered one of our "lifers". It's not only a "job" but this is my life and alongside my fellow dispatchers, we take this position very seriously. We just want recognition where we feel it is due. I hope that you will consider my testimony in your decision.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration in this important matter, and for allowing me to testify.

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/30/2022 7:30:36 AM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chon Peters	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill SR72

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/30/2022 9:14:47 AM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Loando	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Emergency services dispatchers are the first line of contact for the public in any emergency situation. They take thousands of calls each day often having to make split second decisions that can make the difference between life and death. They operate complex computer systems and perform multiple tasks providing vital information to field units. They are on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, working weekends, holidays, and often mandatory overtime shifts to ensure that calls for service are answered. Emergency services dispatchers play a vital part in emergency response and should be recognized as first responders.

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/30/2022 2:34:21 PM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sabrina Rogers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Sabrina Rogers, I have worked as a Police Dispatcher for 4 years, two of those years I worked for an agency in California, and I am now very proud to be a part of and represent the Honolulu Police dept.

In my years dispatching for California, I was not initially considered a first responder, but after fighting for many years we finally won that battle and became recognized as first responders in the state of California.

Unfortunately it was very disappointing to have fought so hard for that to come work for another department to find that I have to fight this battle again.

That being said currently many states are now following suit; and it is beyond time.

There is currently a mass under staffing issue with dispatchers not just here in Honolulu, but all over the country and I believe this is greatly due to the fact that we are not considered first responders which equates to inadequate wages, training, and work environments.

The homeland security act of 2002 defines the term "first responder" as someone who in the beginning of an emergency incident are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence, and the environment. By definition that is exactly what we do on a daily basis.

Currently we are considered secretaries. With all due respect to secretaries they are not required to come to work during a hurricane, pandemic, or any other mass emergency event. They are not forced to leave the safety of their home during an emergency event and leave their families at home to assist the public. They do not hold people's lives in their hands, they are not forced to work a 12 or 16 hour shift because they are short staffed.

With every key stroke we are saving lives and getting people the urgent help they need as fast as we can. We are an essential part of any emergency event and should be recognized as such.

Thank you,

Sabrina Rogers

Police Communications Officer I, Honolulu Police Dept.

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/30/2022 3:02:21 PM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Flossie Ann Leong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Flossie Ann “Ah Lan” Leong and I strongly support SCR 79 and SR 72.

Dispatchers are the FIRST to experience the impact of a 911 caller’s pain, panic, anger, terror, or frustration, and in an emergency, callers often may not know or be able to communicate where they are. A dispatcher will be the FIRST to use their specialized training, knowledge, experience and computer equipment/software to ascertain the caller’s emergency and location, BEFORE a police officer, paramedic or fire fighter can be dispatched. And do it all over the phone.

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/30/2022 3:23:27 PM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Albert Battease	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I am absolutely in favor of recognizing 911 Emergency Services Dispatchers as First Responders.

I am currently a Police Communications Supervisor that has been working in the Communications Division of the Honolulu Police Department for over 26 years. I can honestly say that dispatchers are without a doubt First Responders. We are the ones that take that initial call from frantic, excited and often times traumatized callers. Dispatchers are the ones that have to calm down the callers, extract vital necessary information to get the officers to the scene expeditiously with as much information possible to ensure public and officer safety. This is expected of our dispatchers regardless of their own emotions.

While dispatchers are not physically responding to scenes we are there emotionally, often times visualizing the worse. There is often no closure for the calltakers/dispatchers as they are busy moving on to the next call. However, emotional trauma builds over the years. I have personally been working when many tragedies have occurred. These include officer involved shootings, fatalities, critical incidents and even cases involving children. Whether taking the initial call or supervising these incidents they take a cumulative toll on our mental wellbeing. Two cases that have really affected me personally were the night that Officer Garrett Davis was rear ended on the freeway and killed and that fateful morning back in January 2021 when we had two officers ambushed and killed. You always ask yourself if there was anything else I could have done. There is no doubt that PTSD in this job is very real.

While not being given the designation of "Essential Workers" Dispatchers are designated as "Emergency Responders" and as such are required to report to work during natural disasters.

Honolulu Police Dispatch serves as the alternate to the State Warning Point for all weather related events.

This Bill recognizes dispatchers for what they do and who they are, First Responders.

Respectfully submitted.

Albert Battease

Police Communications Officer IV

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/30/2022 3:46:58 PM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leila Battease	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have been a Police Communications Officer II for 25 years. It is a fulfilling yet very stressful job. We should be recognized as first responders because that is what we are. When you call 911 & ask for the police you get us. We are the ones who make sure an officer is sent to you. When there is a natural disaster, we are the ones who have to report to work & leave our families behind so that someone will be there to answer your 911 call & send an officer to whatever problem you might be having. Its way past time for us to be considered first responders.

Thank you,

Leila Battease

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/30/2022 4:36:28 PM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathryn Howe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Kathryn Howe, and I am currently a Police Communications Officers I with the Honolulu Police Department. I am proud to say that I have almost reached my one year mark of working for the department.

Although one year of experience may not seem like enough, my experience with the department has emphasized that dispatchers are first responders and should be considered so by the state. Firstly, this job required months of background checks and training. The training itself took six months, which is similar to training of other positions considered as first responders.

Emergency call takers and dispatchers are quite literally the first individuals to learn about an emergency. As a call taker, I get all the vital information from callers who are in distress. It is important to get as much information as possible and necessary as this can affect how the officers respond as well as the amount of officers who do respond. The job also requires calming callers down, which can prevent further incidents from occurring.

It is not appropriate for a dispatcher to be considered a secretarial position. Dispatchers face more stress and their jobs can be quite literally the difference between life and death. Secretaries don't require thorough background checks that can take months on end, nor are they mandated to work overtime. Mandated overtime is required for dispatchers, as if there are not enough employees working, the response time to emergencies may be too long. Dispatchers are also required to come in during natural disasters and holidays, which further emphasizes the importance of the job. This position is vital to the agency and should be categorized as so.

Thank you,

Kathryn Howe

Police Communications Officer I

Honolulu Police Department

LATE

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/30/2022 8:19:24 PM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
HELEN	Testifying for HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

WHAT IS A “FIRST RESPONDER”? BY DEFINITION, IT IS SOMEONE DESIGNATED OR TRAINED TO RESPOND TO AN EMERGENCY. HOW ARE WE, AS POLICE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICERS, MORE COMMONLY KNOWN AS DISPATCHERS STILL NOT CONSIDERED FIRST RESPONDERS?

19 YEARS AGO I WENT THROUGH THE SAME PROCESSING AND BACK GROUND CHECKS THAT POLICE OFFICERS GO THROUGH TO GET TO THE ACADEMY. AFTER MAKING IT THROUGH THE SELECTION PROCESS, I SPENT AN ENTIRE YEAR TRAINING TO LEARN EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW IN ORDER TO BECOME A SUCCESSFUL DISPATCHER. I’D SAY THAT COVERS THE “DESIGNATED AND TRAINED” PART OF THE FIRST REPONDER DEFINITION.

IF ANYTHING WE AS DISPATCHERS ARE THE VERY FIRST RESPONDER. THE FIRST PERSON THE PUBLIC SPEAKS TO AT SOMETIMES THE WORST DAY OF THEIR LIVES. WE HAVE BEEN TRAINED TO REMAIN CALM AND GATHER THE PERTINANT INFORMATION NEEDED TO HELP THE CALLERS IN ANY WAY WE CAN. WE EXPEDITIOUSLY SEND THE CASES TO THE RADIO FOR QUICK POLICE RESPONSE, BECAUSE WE ALL KNOW THAT SECONDS LITTERALLY SAVES LIVES.

WE NOT ONLY NEED TO KNOW HOW TO TRIAGE A CALL, BUT WE ALSO NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE INS AND OUTS OF WHAT THE OFFICERS DO OUT ON THE ROAD TO ENSURE THEY ARE SAFE AT ALL TIMES. MULTI-TASKING AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL IS THE ONLY WAY ONE CAN EXPLAIN WHAT A POLICE RADIO DISPATCHER DOES. WE ARE THE ONES WHO GET THE AMBULANCE GOING, TOW WAGONS COMING, WARRANTS CONFIRMED SO ARRESTS CAN BE MADE, AND THE PUBLIC CAN BE SAFE.

I COULD GO ON AND ON, BUT AFTER 18+ YEARS OF SERVICE AS A POLICE RADIO DISPATCHER, I JUST HAVE WAY TOO MANY SELLING POINT ON WHY – WE SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED AS FIRST RESPONDERS.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME,

HELEN PRENTICE

POLICE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER II

HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT

LATE

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/30/2022 5:29:22 PM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bertie Johnson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

During times of crisis and disaster, 911 emergency services dispatchers are routinely designated as emergency responders and are required to report to work, while others are afforded administrative leave or the ability to work from home. As 911 emergency services dispatchers, our duties and responsibilities are vital enough to be required in times of need and should be recognized as just as vital on a daily basis.

I am a police dispatch supervisor with the Honolulu Police Department and have been a dispatcher since 2004. One of my worst calls occurred while I was still in the training phase in my first year as a dispatcher. I took a call from a female whose partner had just committed suicide. It was while I was on the phone with her that she realized that he was gone, and the sound of her heartbreak stays with me. Through the years, I have taken countless calls from those in times of need and crisis and even more from people who just need some help, be it with a neighbor being too loud or needing to make a report. Many times, we are not afforded the comfort of knowing the outcome of a call once we hang up. We have to move on to the next call and the call after that. Not only do we deal with the public, we are also the lifeline for our units on the road. From routine checks and requests to maintaining updates while they are chasing down a suspect, a dispatcher is the ears and documenter of all that occurs. As a dispatcher, you develop the necessary tools to cope with what you hear, but it is not something you ever forget. We are here seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day all year, ready to handle whatever is on the other side of the line once we answer the phone or transmission. We are the first to help those in need and should be recognized as the first responders we are.

LATE

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/30/2022 5:37:48 PM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
MARSELLA EBERHARDT	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hi my name is Marsella Eberhardt and I have been a Police Dispatcher for 27 years.

I support this bill and hoping it will be passed. Its way overdue. We should be considered First Responders. We are literally the first point of contact the public has when they call for Police. We take the calls, get all the pertinent information and send a Policemen. During a Natural Disaster who other than First Responders have to report to work? We do. So why shouldn't we be recognized for it.

Thank you,

Marsella Eberhardt, Police Communications Officer II

LATE

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/30/2022 8:44:56 PM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dallas Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Police communication officers should be, without a doubt, considered first responders. We entail so many different tasks from picking up the phone to sending out the first wave of help – all while providing possibly life-saving instructions to our callers and officers. Dispatchers are the nucleus and quite literally the ‘first responder’ to any emergency. Being a dispatcher requires significant and lengthy training and competencies such as situational assessment skills and sound judgment, strong public and internal relations, teamwork and advanced multitasking skills are put to the test on a daily basis. Significant shortages of available, well-trained and experienced personnel can tip the scales of competency and place the agency and its employees at higher risk for liability when providing critical services to citizens and officers alike. Dispatchers know they save lives every day in ways that go far beyond just taking a phone call, as a switchboard or telephone operator, and logging it into a complex software-tracking system. For dispatchers working in the industry, the potential for reclassification is the first step in ensuring qualified people are on the front lines of an emergency and ensuring our communities safety.

LATE

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/30/2022 8:52:55 PM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chelsea Irvine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Chelsea Irvine, have been with the Honolulu Police Department since 2018. I'm writing on behalf of myself & other dispatchers in emergency services. I support this bill SCR79 & SR72, as we are indeed first responders.

As a Police Communications Officer II, we are the first to take calls for any type of emergency. When we answer the phone we have no idea what can be on the other line, a shooting, a stabbing, or just someone that needs help that got a flat tire on the freeway... We must obtain accurate information, descriptions, locations, all within seconds to help the person on the other line. We then must relay the information quickly, correctly & efficiently to help officers locate both the victim and/or possible suspects.

From an outsider's perspective, people think our job is simple... answer the phone. Yet, it's much more than that--there is a reason we are continuously short handed. This job isn't for everyone. The stress is overwhelming, taking calls day in & out and sending officers to high priority cases you know little about is unimaginable. We hear and pick up on everyone's stress and emotions, whether it be through callers over the phone or officers transmissions over the air. Do that continuously for 8, sometimes 12 hrs. It's far from easy.

Although we work short, get mandated into overtime hours, we all still continue to come to work daily to serve the public as essential employees, but lack recognition. We often feel we are the forgotten ones. Solely because we are not seen, but only heard. By passing these two bills (SCR79 & SC72) we will directly be respected as First Responders. It's time we are all acknowledged & respected as First Responders.

Thank you,

Chelsea Irvine

LATE

Aloha, My name is Ikaika Green and I have worked for the Honolulu Police Department for 11 plus years. When applying for the job of Police communications officer i had little or no idea of what to expect and what predisposed notions I had of how this job and the department worked as a whole were laughable. When I thought of a police dispatcher I has visons of a little old lady sitting in front of a rotary phone at the local substation filing her nails and taking calls one by one and writing notes for service for officers or some other homey notion of what dispatch was. And of course I was wrong, the longer I am here and the better I get at the job my realization of what we doing and how we hold the machine together only increases.

You must understand, we are the first contact with the public...we bear the full weight of whatever anger, stress or fear they are experiencing. We are there for the whole ride, yet our training allows us to channel what they give us into action. Where are you, what crisis is transpiring, what support is needed to get you that help as efficiently and quickly as possible. Equally important is all the forethought and experience juggling the needs and safety of our officers out on the road, the sifting of information they give us, what we are hearing, all while researching and getting the information they need in real time. It is hard to give you an example without telling some war story or experience which I have which will just sound trite or tacky...because at the end of the day I'm on to the next...that was that situation and the freight train that is public service doesn't slow for anyone.

I could tell you what we do and it would sound like white noise after a few sentences, yes we take calls for the public, yes we work radios and juggle cases and officers with four hands, yes I have six monitors, running twenty eight different pieces of software, three keyboards, a head set on and a multichannel speaker monitoring my coworkers at all times. I have to be able to be fluent in monitoring weather systems, NCIC criminal databases and doing any and all research needed at the drop of a dime. Every so often when the City assayers come in to decide whether or not we are worth our pay, we plug them in to a radio and their eyes go blank and usually the most we get is a stuttered "I don't understand what's going on". You aren't supposed to...that's what we are here for, that's what makes us good at what we do. Most importantly everything is in the now, all of our duties pertain to dealing with what is needed immediately, we adapt and roll with situations that are changing constantly and sometimes explosively. And if that's isn't the definition of first responder then I don't know what is.

Mahalo for your time,

PCOII Ikaika Green.

LATE

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/31/2022 3:40:51 AM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica LM Lafaele	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Jessica Lafaele and I am writing in **SUPPORT OF RESOLUTION (SCR79/SR72)**.

"The Homeland Security Act of 2002 defines the term "*first responder*" as "individuals who, in the early stages of an incident, are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence, and the environment." Who better, by this very definition, can be considered a first responder than the dispatcher who is the start of everything – from picking up the phone to creating the record in the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system with the very first keystroke to sending out the first wave of help – all while providing life-saving instructions. Dispatchers are the nucleus of any emergency event." *Content provided by CentralSquare Technologies via GovThink.com*

LATE

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/31/2022 3:42:13 AM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniel Netz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Daniel Netz and I have been a Police Communications Officer with the Honolulu Police Department for the past 19 years. I urge you to support this resolution to have us classified as "First Responders" in order to adequately recognize the work that we do. The job of a Police Communications Officer is very detailed. The training alone takes a full year to complete. Our job duties include answer emergency 911 calls, dispatching police officers to those calls for service, and keeping up to date the law enforcement files.

Currently we are classified as secretaries. When I am taking a highly intense call from a woman who was just abused by her boyfriend, I don't feel like a secretary. When I am taking a call about a critical car accident that just occurred, I don't feel like a secretary. And when I am on the police radio dispatching officers out to a bank robbery, shooting, or large affray, I don't feel like a secretary.

"First Responder" status is just one step towards getting us the recognition we truly deserve for the work that we perform. Thank you for your time in reading my letter and I appreciate your support in approving this resolution. Thanks Daniel Netz

LATE

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/31/2022 4:17:16 AM
Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
HAUNANI APAO	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am Haunani Apao, Police Radio Dispatcher (PCO) for the Honolulu Police Department. I have been with the Communications Division for a little over 3 years. I would like to provide my testimony on bills SR72 and SCR79 for myself and peers alike to be recognized as First Responders.

I came from a medical background and assumed this role would just be like a typical call center you see on TV shows but was hugely mistaken. You are put through rigorous background and psychological checks the same as police officer, then a 1 year hands-on training program. Upon coming here, I did not have any idea the skill set and training that was needed until that first call then it all slowly made sense. We are the first contact the public has in any situation and could be a factor between someone life aor death.

Training gave me the foundation to begin any call however every call in itself is unique. We also service other agencies such as HFD, EMS, Ocean Safety, DO Care, Pearl Harbor, Sheriffs, Harbors, DLNR and OTS. We provide them with sending officers to co-respond with critical cases and or when the responders are fearful for their own safety. Everything we do must be done in a timely manner thus our motto, "Seconds Save Lives.". We are a hub, a network for all to call and are expected to have answers and or be able to direct them to whom they can get those answers from. Calls range from simple parking complaints then your next would escalate into a shooting. Skill and timeliness is vital in getting these callers the assistance they need in their time of need with our biggest factor in mind, keeping those responding safe. We have to be able to deescalate an already excited caller, control the direction of the call to get vital information on the scenario we are sending our first responders to.

Radio is a completely different aspect, like the public we are an officer's lifeline. Radio transmissions aren't always the clearest, outdated equipment, weather and or background noise factor in when being able to clearly understanding units in the field. Being timely in getting back-up, understanding and fulfilling requests made by the officers for theirs and public's safety such as stalled vehicles and or major accidents. We can never truly know what we are sending our officers to but always need to be ready. Like the routine nuisance complaint in Waikiki from a male they were familiar with, then turned into a multiple officer involved shooting. You hear the sheer panic in their voices. You yourself are scared for them and frantic in trying to get them all the help they need then left with radio silence. Your thoughts run wild and you panic for them thinking the worst scenario but still trying to remain calm and push through. You're then left in

the dark, never knowing the who's and why's, or any outcome. Not getting closure on a case you're invested in and just continuing forward because the cases never stop.

Our training, ability to multitask and be able to react in seconds to give persons vital information in an already high stressed environment is profound aspect in why I believe we deserve to be considered First Responders with our fellow brothers and sisters. Think of us as the heartbeat, without our passion to serve our community, compassion for our fellow brothers and sisters and willingness to continue honing our skillset everything surrounding us will most likely suffer.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Haunani Apao, PCO II

LATE

SR-72

Submitted on: 3/31/2022 7:29:53 AM

Testimony for GVO on 3/31/2022 3:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bonnie Kim	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I work as a Police Communications Officer II at the Honolulu Police Department. I fully support the senate Concurrent Resolution 79 and Senate Resolution 72.

Communications Officer is an attendance critical position which requires each of our three watches to have a minimum number of employees to operate. When this number falls below that requirement (due to sick calls, personal on vacation, injuries, etc.) the previous watch personnel would be mandated to stay an additional four hours. The number personnel would be determined by how many below the minimum the previous watch is. We are also required to be mandated to work during natural disasters. The most recent was August 2018 when Hurricane Lane was posing a threat to the island of Oahu. We were told to be prepared to stay at the main police station, possibly for days if Oahu took a direct hit. I think this qualifies Dispatchers as First responders. Currently Dispatchers, like Police officers, having been running short on our watches. So the mandate situation has been occurring more often leaving our personnel overworked and stressed.

Besides the position being attendance critical, there are many duties that we perform that keep the public safe on Oahu. A dispatcher must call upon their experience and training to decipher what needs to be done to render aid to the caller within seconds of picking up the phone line and skillfully relay information to the Police Officers within our complex computer system.

The kind of stress that Police Communications Officers experience is not the kind of stress that everyday people deal with. It has been said that we experience PTSD. This results after years of helping callers and officers who are experiencing difficult situations. This goes on for hours, days, weeks, years and a career. Cumulative stress can affect work performance, work attendance, personal relationships and social relationships in addition to causing physical illness. A Police Dispatcher is a First Responder.

Police Communications Officers exhibit extraordinary communication and computer skills while under extreme pressure and still remain calm and do our job. We work short-handed and still make sure every call gets answered, every transmission from an officer gets acknowledged.

We are Police Communications Officers. We are Emergency Workers. We are First Responders.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Bonnie Kim

Police Communications Officer II

POLICE DEPARTMENT
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR

RADE K. VANIC
INTERIM CHIEF

OUR REFERENCE AF-DK

March 31, 2022

LATE

The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Chair
and Members
Committee on Government Operations
The Honorable Clarence K. Nishihara, Chair
and Members
Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental,
and Military Affairs
State Senate
Hawaii State Capitol
515 South Beretania Street, Room 016
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chairs Moriwaki and Nishihara and Members:

SUBJECT: Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 79 (S.C.R. No. 79) and Senate Resolution No. 72 (S.R. No. 72), Urging the Counties to Recognize 911 Emergency Services Dispatchers as First Responders in Their Respective Jurisdictions

The Honolulu Police Department (HPD) supports S.C.R. No. 79 and S.R. No. 72, Urging the Counties to Recognize 911 Emergency Services Dispatchers as First Responders in Their Respective Jurisdictions, placing them rightfully alongside other protectors and guardians of the community.

HPD emergency response operators and police communications officers are very often the first public safety employees contacted in an emergency for people needing a law enforcement officer, firefighter, emergency medical services, or ocean safety personnel. They have a critical role that directly supports all first responders in the field and are essential for the daily operations of all public safety agencies.

The HPD supports S.C.R. No. 79 and S.R. No. 72, to further distinguish all public safety telecommunications personnel for their commitment and service to their organizations and the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rade K. Vanic".

Rade K. Vanic
Interim Chief of Police