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Community Outreach

January 24, 2026

Electronic Mail

The Honorable Deb Fischer, Chair
Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Media
United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

The Honorable Ben Ray Luján, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Media
United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

RE: Support for FirstNet Reauthorization

Dear Chair Fischer and Ranking Member Luján:

FirstNet has become an essential operational capability for public safety agencies nationwide. It supports frontline response, large-scale incidents, disaster coordination, and daily mission-critical communications. Its reliability is directly linked to the governance and oversight structure established by Congress in 2012.

We strongly support reauthorization of FirstNet consistent with that original statutory design and do not support changes to its governance or management oversight framework. Congress deliberately vested authority in an independent FirstNet Authority with substantial public safety representation. This structure ensures that operational realities, responder safety, and mission requirements guide decisions rather than short-term administrative or political considerations. Stability and predictability are essential for communications systems relied upon during emergencies.

Public safety professionals remain concerned that changes to the original governance model could erode operational independence and introduce uncertainty into long term planning, investment, and system evolution. Mission-critical infrastructure requires continuity and insulation from shifting political priorities. Existing oversight mechanisms already provide

appropriate accountability. Independent annual audits conducted by the Department of Commerce ensure transparency while preserving the flexibility necessary for operational

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excellence. When issues are identified, corrective actions are implemented that strengthen the program.

FirstNet's performance demonstrates that this model works. It is widely regarded as one of the most effective public-private partnerships established by Congress and has achieved nationwide impact without additional taxpayer appropriations beyond those originally authorized.

We appreciate the Subcommittee's leadership and urge Congress to preserve the governance principles that have made FirstNet a trusted and indispensable system for public safety.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Bakkedahl", is positioned above the typed name.

Jon Bakkedahl, MS, CEM, NVEM, MEP
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