

NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

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May 19, 2025

The Honorable Ted Cruz , Chairman
Senate Committee on
Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brett Guthrie Chairman
House Committee on
Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on
Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Committee on
Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Support for Eliminating the FirstNet Sunset Clause

Dear Senator Cruz, Senator Cantwell, Representative Guthrie, and Representative Pallone:

On behalf of the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs (NYSAFC), we write to express our strong support for legislative action to eliminate the statutory sunset clause governing the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet). Ensuring the long-term continuity of FirstNet is critical to the effectiveness and safety of New York's fire service, both volunteer and career, who serve communities of every size and setting across the state. If the February 2027 sunset date included in the Middle-Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 is not removed, the FirstNet program will end, leaving thousands of agencies without this critical communications technology.

NYSAFC represents over 10,000 fire service leaders from across New York State. Our members lead departments operating in the heart of New York City, in remote mountain hamlets, on Long Island's coast, and along our boarder with Canada. Whether responding to a house fire in a rural town or managing a major urban incident, all fire departments rely on the ability to communicate clearly and reliably. FirstNet has become an essential tool for ensuring that happens.

FirstNet is unique in its design and purpose. It is a dedicated broadband communications platform built to serve first responders, offering priority and preemption during emergencies. These capabilities are especially vital in times of large-scale incidents, weather events, and mass gatherings, when commercial networks can quickly become congested.

Importantly, FirstNet has focused on reaching underserved and rural areas, where coverage gaps have historically placed responders at a disadvantage. In New York, many volunteer departments serve areas with challenging topography and limited infrastructure. FirstNet has provided new levels of connectivity to those agencies, improving safety, coordination, and access to information.

Today, FirstNet supports approximately 7 million connections across 30,000 public safety agencies. The fire service has embraced this network because it meets real-world needs, not theoretical ones. But as long as FirstNet's future is tied to a looming sunset date, our ability to rely on it for the long term remains uncertain. We urge Congress to act now to remove the sunset provision and provide permanent, stable authority for FirstNet.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your continued support of America's fire service.

Sincerely,


Bruce E. Heberer

Chief Executive Officer

New York State Association of Fire Chiefs (NYSAFC)

cc: New York Congressional Delegation

"PROVIDING SERVICE TO THOSE WHO SERVE"