



IAFC/NFPA Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association



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August 6, 2026

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Deb Fisher
Chair
Subcommittee on Telecommunications
And Media
Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ben Ray Lujan
Ranking member
Subcommittee on Telecommunications
And Media
Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Support for Reauthorization of the First Responder Network Authority

Dear Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, Chair Fischer, and Ranking Member Lujan:

The Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association represents over 226 leaders from agencies across the state. Our members are committed to advancing the protection of life, property, and the environment through leadership, education, and advocacy. On behalf of our members, I write to express our strong support for the reauthorization of the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority).

As leaders of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and its Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Media, you play a central role in ensuring the continuity and advancement of the nation's only dedicated public safety broadband network.

The FirstNet Authority was established by Congress in 2012 following communication challenges identified during major national emergencies, including the September 11, 2001, attacks. Congress created the FirstNet Authority within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to provide first responders with a secure, interoperable, and resilient communications network designed specifically for public safety operations.

Since its inception, the FirstNet Authority has successfully met its congressional mandate. The Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) was completed on schedule and within budget, providing reliable, prioritized, and preemptive broadband communications to more than 31,900 public safety agencies across over more than 3 million square miles of coverage. It operates under a fiscally responsible, self-sustaining funding model, requiring no ongoing appropriations from Congress. It has been called the single most successful public private partnership in the history of the United States.

The operational oversight and structure of the FirstNet Authority Board, which includes both public safety and industry leaders, ensures accountability, transparency, and continued innovation. The Authority's success has resulted in a trusted ecosystem of public safety applications, devices, and solutions that enhance situational awareness and coordination during complex incidents.

Reauthorization of the FirstNet Authority before the 2027 deadline is essential to maintaining the operational integrity and modernization of this network. The United States Government Accountability Office has emphasized that failure to reauthorize the Authority would jeopardize the sustainability of the network and undermine the confidence of the first responder community.

Our vast communities across the United States have witnessed firsthand the operational value of FirstNet during disasters, critical emergency response, planned and unplanned events and other large-scale incidents. The ability to maintain dependable, prioritized communications across jurisdictions and disciplines has strengthened emergency response capabilities and saved lives.

For example, the FirstNet network played a critical role in helping local fire, EMS, and Law enforcement prepare for the FIFA World Cup 2026 by supplying resources to allow local responders to communicate seamlessly and effectively despite the large crowds of fans. FirstNet also provided support to events in my home state of Florida, including a 2026 Formula One race in Miami; the UFL playoff game in Daytona Beach; and numerous local sporting and civic events. Also, it is important to recognize the critical role that FirstNet played in providing lifesaving communications during the emergency response to the Surfside Towers collapse in 2021.

In support of a unified public safety effort, the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association respectfully urges the Committee and Subcommittee to take prompt action to reauthorize the First Responder Network Authority. Doing so will reaffirm Congress's commitment to public safety and ensure that America's first responders continue to have the reliable and interoperable communications network they need to protect the communities they serve.

Sincerely,



Otto Drozd III
Fire Chief (Ret.)
Executive Secretary
Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association/NFPA