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Senate Bill 379, Proponent Testimony

The State 911 Board has not had the opportunity to meet and establish a consensus position on SB 379, particularly on the use of 911 Operations dollars to fund the effort. The following testimony reflects my opinion as a member of the SB 11 Exploratory Committee.

I support SB 379 for the flexibility provided to public safety answering points (PSAPs, or 911 call centers) and for the potential cost savings by leveraging economies of scale through statewide procurement. In alignment with the Board's stated position, I remain neutral with respect to local operational decisions regarding emergency medical dispatch (EMD) and telecommunicator cardiopulmonary resuscitation (T-CPR).

SB 379 authorizes the State 911 Board to coordinate a statewide EMD and T-CPR program, including the ability to establish statewide protocols, procure medical direction services, and offer a centralized quality assurance option. Importantly, the bill preserves local control by making participation in these services voluntary. PSAPs may continue to retain or procure their own protocols, medical direction, and quality assurance services if they determine that local solutions best meet their community's needs.

The primary benefit of SB 379 is the ability to create optional statewide or multi-agency procurement arrangements. Centralized purchasing or negotiated contracts can reduce duplication of effort, increase consistency in available services, and provide cost savings, particularly for smaller PSAPs that may otherwise face higher per-agency costs.

The existing NG911 Hosted Solution call-handling system already supports the seamless transfer of medical calls to partner PSAPs across the state. Combined with the procurement options in SB 379, this technology ensures that even the smallest agencies have a range of flexible options to provide high-quality medical dispatch without a heavy local administrative burden.

SB 379 clarifies civil liability protections by amending the Kansas Tort Claims Act to include EMD and T-CPR services. By aligning these services with the existing "gross and wanton negligence" standard, the bill ensures that PSAPs giving life-saving instructions over the phone have clear and consistent legal protections similar to those of the personnel who arrive on the scene.

In summary, I support SB 379 because it expands options, enables potential savings through coordinated procurement, and preserves local authority. I appreciate the Legislature's attention to both statewide efficiency and local flexibility in this proposal.

Thank you for your consideration.

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