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Office of
Information Technology

March 13, 2013

Congressman Bob Latta
Ohio's 5th District
2448 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Latta,

I appreciate the opportunity to express my concerns regarding FirstNet and the Public Safety Broadband Network (PSBN). The majority of these concerns are around funding, communication, planning and representation. I would also like to touch on initiatives we have moving forward in Ohio.

I continue to have funding concerns relative to FirstNet, both from the State's perspective as well as the $2 Billion for planning and the anticipated raising of $5 Billion. This $7 Billion, from what I understand, at best accounts for a third of the necessary funding to implement a network of this magnitude nationally. The timing for when this funding is raised and accessible will have a significant impact on the deployment schedule for this effort.

The direction coming out of the FirstNet Board members has been inconsistent. I have yet to see a defined business case, a sustainable business model or any approach regarding a cost recovery mechanism - before building out the PSBN. Current efforts focus on obtaining a list of assets and an inventory that may be available to support the effort with FirstNet dictating its use. The ultimate design and planning aspects of FirstNet will impact existing public safety and emergency response efforts in many states. Understanding these models may limit efforts and state funding to subsidize the build out of the PSBN.

Commercial/cellular providers need to strongly consider the requirements for "mission critical" communications. Recent communication issues associated with Hurricane Sandy are a case in point. What are the options available to states if commercial carriers cannot carry mission critical voice across their platforms?

In my opinion, for FirstNet to be successful they need to focus on developing relationships with the states and include ongoing and realistic interaction in the planning, developing, piloting and ultimate roll-out of the platform. FirstNet's approach should be one of engagement, not product marketing to the states.

The states will have a major role to play in this effort and should be identified partners in FirstNet. Defined state representation on the FirstNet Board is a critical factor to ensure our concerns are addressed. Statewide efforts such as Land Mobile Radio (LMR) systems and Next Generation 911 efforts currently underway or operating in numerous states must be considered. Engaging with the states will assist FirstNet with clearly defining the states' role and responsibilities for the successful deployment of this ambitious effort. It will ensure ongoing initiatives and efforts are taken into account and leveraged.

My concerns ultimately are around existing efforts in Ohio. Ohio's land mobile radio system - Multi-Agency Radio Communications System (MARCS) - is currently providing "mission critical" voice and data for our public safety and first responders. Additionally, we are currently defining user and technical requirements for Next Generation NG-911 for Ohio. Clarity on how these efforts will be impacted by FirstNet is critical to our planning and these types of requirements must be considered in the architecting of PSBN solutions.

Thank you for time and consideration regarding these FirstNet concerns.

Sincerely,

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Assistant Director
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