

January 15, 2014

Charlotte Savercool  
Legislative Clerk  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ms. Savercool,

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify and address additional questions for the record from testimony provided at the hearing entitled "Oversight of FirstNet and the Advancement of Public Safety Wireless Communications," held on November 21, 2013.

Please find enclosed answers to the questions posed by the Honorable Anna Eshoo and the Honorable Henry Waxman.

Thank you again for the opportunity to answer additional questions for the record, and if there are further questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Stuart R. Davis  
State CIO/Assistant Director

## Attachment – Additional Questions for the Record

### The Honorable Anna Eshoo

- 1. When Congress passed the Public Safety and Spectrum Act last Congress, our goal was to address many of the challenges that have faces public safety for decades, including the lack of vibrant competitive marketplace for public safety-grade devices; limited innovation; and exorbitant device costs. Do you believe that your state’s first responders will benefit from FirstNet’s solutions to the challenges faced by legacy systems?**

Thank you for your question Ranking Minority Leader Eshoo. Yes, we believe Ohio will benefit from FirstNet’s solutions and we are supportive of the effort. We are on board with the vision and have been attempting to provide constructive observations and suggestions. Our concerns are with the build and run or operational components of FirstNet. Adoption and use will be critical to the success of FirstNet and our observations, experiences and lessons learned in Ohio may assist in this success. Many of the concerns we raise are being expressed to us from our Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) public safety/first responder participants and adopters.

We realize that some of these questions can’t be answered at this time, but the States need to be an integral part of the ongoing design effort. We clearly want to be part of the solution and look forward to a closer working relationship with FirstNet. This engagement is necessary to ensure these concerns are heard and addressed so state and local public safety/first responders are appropriately engaged and informed.

### The Honorable Henry Waxman

- 1. At the hearing, you explained that your state is constantly struggling with how to lower the costs for public safety users to participate in Ohio’s Multi-Agency Radio Communications System (MARCS). Following the hearing, I reviewed MSARCS’ website and was surprised to see the cost for public safety users to participate. For example, not only are MARCS’ subscribers responsible for purchasing and maintaining their own proprietary, costly equipment, but they are also charged an annual \$240 service fee. All of this for radios that have minimal data capability and lack full nationwide interoperability. See <http://das.ohio.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=P63AjWGSBVY%3d&tabid=124>**

**Let’s be clear, FirstNet has the potential to provide public safety users with a number of benefits that they have never had before, including national-level bargaining power and national-level economies of scale. Undoubtedly, FirstNet’s users will have significantly lower device costs that what MARCS currently offers. Further, these devices will be standards-based and fully interoperable on a nationwide basis. FirstNet will also deliver technologies that are far more advanced than the products MARCS offers. I hope that you plan to take advantage of this golden opportunity and do everything possible to work with FirstNet to make it a success. That said, could you please explain what steps you plan to take to work with FirstNet to ensure the public safety users in Ohio have access to affordable and technologically-advanced communications equipment and services?**

Thank you for your question Ranking Member Waxman. We are supportive of FirstNet and our expression of or concerns are meant to be constructive. Questions regarding the business model, ongoing operational support and funding are questions we receive from state agencies and local government public safety and emergency first responders. Before addressing next steps, we would like to clarify a few issues you raised.

MARCS, Ohio's Land Mobile Radio (LMR) system was originally designed to support secured, interoperable "push to talk" communications for public safety and emergency first responders. It has, and continues to provide an interoperable (to Ohio) 700/800 MHz, P-25 compliant system with limited data capabilities. No one we know of today has this capability on "full nationwide interoperable system."

We provide, facilitate and support numerous public safety and emergency first responders on grants and grant submissions for the purchase of equipment, including radios. We hear little negative feedback regarding the cost of radios and more about the monthly operating fee. MARCS' current business model provides operations and user support for \$20 per month per radio subscription or \$240 per year. It seems premature to say this is too costly when we don't know or understand what the funding and support model or the subscription rate will be for FirstNet.

Clearly the economies of scale that can be brought to bear from a national perspective are significant and represent a tremendous opportunity. Regarding functionality, the "push to talk" aspect of MARCS has been the largest benefit for adopting the system. As we understand it, this functionality within FirstNet is not currently available and no definitive timeframe has been published. Data needs are evolving and data and data transmission will become increasingly important, but the secured, push to talk functionality will continue to be a critical aspect for public safety and emergency first responders.

Regarding next steps, we are currently in the outreach and education phase of planning for FirstNet. We have been holding a series of meetings with local government and working through our Statewide Interoperable Executive Committee and getting things aligned to support FirstNet and Next Generation 911. We continue to coordinate activities here in Ohio to ensure no surprises come up and we can leverage numerous other initiatives as best we can to support a program as complex and significant as FirstNet. Communication with FirstNet has increased and the discussions around the development of State Plans are very positive.

We are supportive of FirstNet and remain interested and engaged in its success. As Coach John Wooden said, "If you don't have time to do it right, when will you have time to do it over?" We have one shot at getting and doing this right and we firmly believe the stronger the engagement from the States, the better chance of a successful result.