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CONTACT

Christine Brennan — (202) 225-5735

**Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr., as prepared for delivery
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing on the “Status of the Public Safety Broadband Network”**

Thank you Chairman Walden and Ranking Member Eshoo for holding this hearing today. And thanks to Mr. Furth for being here. I'd also like to welcome back Mr. Kennedy.

It was not many months ago that FirstNet was here to testify. But at the pace that FirstNet is moving, a few months can be a lifetime. Since our last hearing in June, FirstNet has released its much anticipated Request for Proposal. And while government procurements do not usually keep people sitting on the edge of their seats, this one is a big deal. Because it contains the roadmap to the future of communications for first responders.

Back in New Jersey, we know from experience how important it is that we complete this roadmap quickly. After we were struck by Hurricane Sandy, I heard from first responders about their difficulty communicating. I heard time and again how their radios were not interoperable—public safety officials from different communities could not coordinate because their radios could not talk to each other. First responders could not call for help when they needed it.

So this past September I hosted a forum with local officials and industry leaders to see the progress that has been made. Mr. Kennedy also joined us and provided valuable feedback—thank you TJ. Together, we took a critical look at what worked and what did not work during the storm. We learned a lot. I incorporated many of those lessons into the SANDy Act that I recently introduced. We also heard once again that interoperability was a big challenge.

But this is why FirstNet is so important. FirstNet will help ensure that first responders across the country have the best, most rugged, communications equipment. And it will also make sure first responders can hear each other when they call for help.

In New Jersey we are already seeing the fruits of this labor. We are the home to one of FirstNet's five Early Builder Projects—ours is called JerseyNet. These projects are already showing how this network can benefit first responders. I had the opportunity to see this equipment for myself at the forum. It is impressive and it will save lives.

I am happy to say that JerseyNet was up and running when we were hit by the recent snowstorm that crippled the East Coast last month. As large and devastating storms become

more frequent because of climate change, we need FirstNet at full force across the country as soon as possible.

So thank you once again to our witnesses. And with that, I yield the balance of my time.

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