



Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

April 15, 2024

The Honorable Shalanda Young
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Young:

In the past, in recognition of National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, I have written to share my thoughts on the importance of the dedicated professionals around the country who work day and night to respond to calls to our nationwide emergency number—911. This year, during National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, I am once again writing to reiterate my strong support for the classification of these professionals as first responders by the Office of Management and Budget.

Our Nation's 911 operators are among our most vital first responders. Before a fire engine roars or an ambulance races, there is a call to 911. The professionals who take these calls to set emergency response in motion operate with extraordinary skill in a pressure-filled environment. They provide assistance, guidance, and life-saving advice to 911 callers, and they actively plan, coordinate, and direct the response activities of emergency personnel, frequently using complex new technologies and integrating data from multiple sources. Today's 911 telecommunicators are typically required to complete extensive training to qualify for and retain their challenging positions, and training standards have become increasingly rigorous over the years.¹ In addition, public safety telecommunicators often work in stressful situations, responding to calls that may involve active shooters, domestic violence, suicide, and other traumatic events.

There is a movement growing across the country to classify 911 telecommunicators as public safety professionals. Many states are now recognizing the vital first responder role played by public safety telecommunicators and are officially designating these telecommunicators as first responders.² This designation often comes with tangible benefits, including increased

¹ For example, both APCO International and NENA: The 9-1-1 Association offer extensive training classes and also certificate programs for 911 professionals. See <https://www.apcointl.org/training/>; <https://www.nena.org/> and <https://www.nena.org/page/reclassification#>. The National 911 Program, part of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, offers a toolkit to help 911 call centers evaluate, update, and maintain their telecommunicator training programs. It includes listings of accepted training standards, best practices, and certifications. See https://www.911.gov/assets/N911-Program_BLS_Toolkit_Training_08JUNE2022_Final.pdf ("Establishing or Expanding a Public Safety Telecommunicator Training Program—May 2022").

² Over 20 states have passed or are considering legislation to reclassify 911 telecommunicators for various purposes. In March 2024, Colorado enacted legislation reclassifying telecommunicators. See Colo. Rev. Stat. § 29-11-

training, compensation, and mental health assistance. However, at the federal level, the Standard Occupational Classification system, which is overseen by the Office of Management and Budget, continues to classify these 911 professionals as performing an “Office and Administrative Support Occupation” rather than a “Protective Service Occupation.” This is akin to saying that these individuals who work to support public safety have only an administrative role. Nothing could be further from the truth.

As I understand it, the current Standard Occupational Classification system classifications, which were last issued in 2018, are updated on a ten-year cycle, and the notice and comment process for the next update could begin as early as this year. As the Office of Management and Budget begins this process, I would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with you in revising the federal classification of 911 telecommunicators to keep pace with the evolving role of these critical public safety professionals.

Sincerely,



Jessica Rosenworcel

101(10.5), 29-11-104(2)(a)(I)(C) (2024), <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb24-1016> (defining telecommunicators as first responders for certain purposes). In 2023, Missouri, Delaware, and Arizona enacted reclassification legislation. *See* Missouri, Mo. Ann. Stat. § 67.145 (2023) (adding “telecommunicator first responders” to definition of “first responder” as any person trained and authorized to render emergency medical assistance or treatment, along with police officers and others); Delaware, Del. Code Ann. tit. 16 § 10002(1) (2023) (“‘911 dispatcher’ means a first responder working in any 911 dispatch center who is responsible for responding to calls for emergency and non-emergency assistance and dispatching law enforcement, fire-fighting, rescue, or emergency medical units.”); Arizona, Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. §§ 38-672, 38-673 (2023) (adding 911 dispatchers to the definition of “public safety employee” for purposes of certain mental health benefits). In addition, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Tennessee have recently introduced legislation that proposes to treat 911 telecommunicators as first responders. *See* Pennsylvania, HB 1463, <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/Legis/CSM/showMemoPublic.cfm?chamber=H&SPick=20230&cosponId=41055> (2023; proposing to expand the definition of “emergency responder” to include telecommunicators in several contexts); South Carolina, H 3345, https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess125_2023-2024/bills/3345.htm (2023-2024; proposing a definition of “first responder” to include 911 call takers and dispatchers, and entitling them to first responder benefits); Tennessee, HB 1382 and SB 1134, <https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/BillInfo/default.aspx?BillNumber=HB1382&GA=113> (2023; proposing to add public safety dispatchers to the list of “emergency responders” or “first responders” eligible for certain death benefits).