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MEMORANDUM

TO: Commission Members

FROM: Cliff Lippard
Executive Director *Cliff*

DATE: 16 September 2026

SUBJECT: Public Chapter 1103, Acts of 2026 (Emergency Communications)—Panel

Emergency communications systems and services are integral to public safety in the United States—people rely on calling 911 when they have an emergency requiring a quick response. Over the years, as technology has continually evolved, 911 systems across the country have been challenged to adapt, upgrade, and pay for the changes. For example, the upgrade to enhanced 911—or E-911—which provides the location of the caller and a call-back number for 911 calls from wireless phones—was necessary as technology transitioned from landline to wireless phone service. More recently, the transition to Next Generation 911—or NG911—is replacing analog systems with a digital, internet-based network. The Tennessee Emergency Communications Board, which oversees 911 operations, is considered a national 911 leader.

While Tennessee is leading the way, technology continues to change quickly, posing a challenge to adapt to the evolution of telecommunications, fund the state's emergency communications system, and operate the system in an efficient manner. To address these concerns, Public Chapter 1103, Acts of 2026, sponsored by Senator Walley and Representative Bricken, directs the commission to study the emergency communications system and emergency communications districts in Tennessee.

The study must include

1. an analysis of the current funding model for emergency communications systems in this state, and a comparison of the funding models of other states;
2. an analysis of the different operating structures of emergency communications districts (ECDs), along with the benefits or disadvantages of each;
3. an organizational chart of all ECDs from leadership down to the public safety answering points (PSAPs);

4. methods to increase operational and financial consistency and uniformity of all ECDs in this state;
5. a discussion regarding the consolidation of ECDs and analysis of ECD call sharing, particularly in rural areas;
6. the rationale behind maintaining multiple ECDs and whether a uniform, statewide system would be beneficial;
7. an analysis of requiring direct dispatch protocol at all PSAPs; and
8. any other related topic TACIR finds would be of interest to the general assembly, along with recommendations for legislation.

Today, the commission will hear from a panel of stakeholders who are knowledgeable about Tennessee's emergency communications system:

- Curtis Sutton, Executive Director, Tennessee Emergency Communications Board
- Lynn Campbell, Executive Director, Hawkins County Emergency Communications District
- Wes Golden, Mayor, Montgomery County
- Blake Lay, Mayor, Lawrenceburg

Staff invited representatives from the Comptroller's and Governor's offices to participate on the panel, but they were unable to attend because of scheduling conflicts. Staff will present a draft report for review and comment at the commission's next meeting.