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REECE McALISTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SALLIE TANNER
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Georgia Public Service Commission

(404) 656-4501
(800) 282-5813

244 WASHINGTON STREET, SW
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30334-5701

FAX: (404) 656-2341
psc.ga.gov

DOCKET# 3
DOCUMENT# 216659

Docket No. 3

In Re: **Telecommunications Non-Docket**

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF TEXT-TO-911

WHEREAS, the ability to text rather than call 911 is useful for many people, but is essential for the deaf and hard of hearing. Yet, according to a survey conducted by the Georgia Emergency Communications Authority earlier this year, 66 of 144 public safety answering points ("PSAPS") provide Text-to-911, while 75 do not. Three PSAPs did not respond to the survey.

WHEREAS, there are many benefits to Text-to-911, including the following:

1. Accessibility: Text-to-911 provides a means of communication that is accessible to deaf individuals. It allows them to reach out for help during emergencies, including domestic violence situations in which they fear for their life or physical safety. Via text, they are able to do this without relying on voice communications.

2. Real-time communication: Texting allows for real-time communication, enabling faster response times from emergency services. It can help facilitate immediate assistance and support for domestic violence survivors.

3. Confidentiality: Texting provides a level of confidentiality, making it easier for domestic violence survivors to reach out for help discreetly. This can be especially crucial in domestic violence situations, in which the risk of retaliation may be high.

4. Non-verbal communication: Texting allows those in need of emergency services to express themselves using written words, which can be an advantage for those who may struggle with verbal communication or feel more comfortable expressing themselves in writing.

5. Documentation: Text messages can serve as digital evidence in legal proceedings, documenting the details of domestic violence incidents. This evidence can be valuable for survivors seeking legal recourse or protection orders.

WHEREAS, there are also several challenges for Text-to-911, including the following:

1. Limited location coverage: Text-to-911 is not available in all areas of Georgia, creating a patchwork of coverage.

2. Potential delays: There may be delays in response times compared to voice calls due to various factors, such as network congestion or the need for operators to type responses.

3. Communication barriers: Texting relies solely on written words, which may present challenges in conveying complex or nuanced information. It may be more difficult to communicate emotions or provide detailed descriptions of the situation that the individual is currently in.

4. Language and literacy barriers: Some deaf individuals may have limited English proficiency or low literacy levels, which can impact their ability to effectively communicate through text messages. This could potentially hinder the effectiveness of Text-to-911 in certain cases.

5. Technical issues: Texting requires a stable cellular network or internet connection. Technical issues, such as poor signal strength or network outages, can disrupt communication and hinder the individual's ability to reach out for help.

6. Phones limited in capabilities to text 911: Not all phones allow for text messages, such as flip phones with only calling features. One can only use Text-to-911 on a texting platform that supports SMS messaging to and from U.S. numbers.

7. Text-to-911 is not supported within apps on phones and other devices, such as Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp.

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WHEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED, that the Georgia Public Service Commission recognizes both the pros and cons of Text-to-911 but finds that the positive attributes far outweigh the negatives, which are largely surmountable.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that Commission wishes to promote and support the adoption and use of Text-to-911 throughout Georgia.

The above by action of the Commission in Administrative Session on the 5th day of December 2023.

Sallie Tanner
Executive Secretary

12-7-23
DATE

Jason Shaw
Chairman

12-7-23
DATE