

July 7, 2026

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

The Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) strongly supports S.7635-B, which has passed both houses of the Legislature and is awaiting delivery to your office. This bill would allow the state and municipalities to provide an optional 25-year retirement plan to emergency dispatchers.

Emergency dispatchers are an indispensable part of New York's public safety system. As the first point of contact during emergencies, they manage life-and-death situations, calm people in crisis, coordinate first responders, and are repeatedly exposed to traumatic events. Although they rarely witness these incidents firsthand, the cumulative psychological impact of hearing them unfold day after day takes a tremendous toll.

According to the New York State First Responder Mental Health Needs Assessment, emergency dispatchers report the highest rates of anxiety, depression, PTSD symptoms, and suicidal ideation of any first responder group. Yet unlike police officers and firefighters, who generally have access to 20-year retirement plans that recognize the extraordinary demands of their professions, emergency dispatchers are not in a special plan and are often required to work 30 years or more before becoming eligible to retire.

Assessment	Emergency Dispatchers (Traditional retirement age)	Police Officers (20-year retirement)	Firefighters (20-year retirement)
Anxiety Symptoms	<u>69%</u>	60%	50%
Depression Symptoms	<u>73%</u>	56%	48%
PTSD Symptoms	<u>57%</u>	43%	34%
Suicidal Ideation	<u>21%</u>	15%	14%

This disparity contributes to an ongoing recruitment and retention crisis. Nationwide, 911 dispatch centers experienced a 25 percent vacancy rate on average from 2019 to 2022.ⁱ The emotional strain of the job leads to burnout, burnout leads to vacancies, vacancies require mandatory overtime, and mandatory overtime accelerates burnout for the employees who remain. The result is a cycle that steadily erodes the workforce and makes it increasingly difficult for governments to recruit and retain qualified dispatchers. When dispatch centers are understaffed, emergency response can be delayed, placing both first responders and the public at risk.

Allowing the state and municipalities to offer a 25-year retirement plan to these first responders acknowledges the unique demands of this profession and helps make emergency dispatching a more sustainable career. A more competitive retirement benefit will help attract new employees, encourage experienced dispatchers to remain in the

profession, reduce turnover, and lessen the staffing shortages that contribute to mandatory overtime and poor mental health.

Importantly, S.7635-B accomplishes these goals in a fiscally responsible manner. The legislation imposes no mandated costs on the state or local governments; it simply provides participating employers with the option to offer a 25-year retirement plan to their emergency dispatchers.

On behalf of our 250,000 active and retired, public and private employees across New York State, CSEA respectfully requests favorable Executive action on this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joshua Terry", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joshua Terry
Director

Cc: J. Bray
J. Cherry
A. Kondo
A. Vasquez

ⁱ International Academies of Emergency Dispatch and National Association of State 911 Administrators, *America's 911 Workforce Is in Crisis: Results of a Nationwide 911 Staffing Survey* (Spring 2023), https://www.911.gov/assets/IAED_NASNA_Staffing-Survey-Report-2023.pdf.