



NEW YORK STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION
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Memorandum in Support

A9162-A (Pheffer-Amato) / S7635-B (Ryan) -- An Act to amend the retirement and social security law, in relation to the retirement of state, county and municipal 911 operators and dispatchers

The New York State Sheriffs' Association SUPPORTS the above captioned legislation, which would add a new § 89-z to the Retirement and Social Security Law establishing an optional twenty-five year retirement plan for public safety dispatchers, telecommunicators, 911 operators, communications officers, and emergency services dispatchers employed by the state or by a county or municipal emergency services department.

In many of New York's counties, the Sheriff's Office operates the county 911 and emergency dispatch center. The men and women who staff those consoles are the first point of contact for residents facing a medical emergency, a fire, or a crime in progress, and they are frequently required to guide callers through CPR, first aid, and other lifesaving instructions while simultaneously coordinating the response of law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical personnel. This is demanding, high-stress work performed under sustained cognitive and emotional pressure, and it shares far more in common with the public safety titles already eligible for enhanced retirement benefits than with the general civil service workforce.

Sheriffs' Offices continue to struggle with recruitment and retention in dispatch and communications titles. The lack of a retirement benefit comparable to that afforded to other public safety personnel puts county emergency communications centers at a competitive disadvantage and likely contributes to the understaffing and subsequent burnout that our members report. A meaningful retirement incentive is a tool that should be available to counties to stabilize this workforce, and this legislation would give counties that option.

That said, it is important also that this bill preserves local control over its own costs. In order to offer this plan, it would have to be affirmatively adopted by a state, county, or municipal employer. This will allow governments to go at their own pace in phasing in this new benefit. From a Sheriff's perspective this will ensure that other aspects of the

Office's budget will not be cannibalized to implement a mandate; rather, counties and Sheriffs' Offices can plan on how to best provide this option without any degradation to existing law enforcement, correction, or PSAP services.

So, for the foregoing reasons, the New York State Sheriffs' Association respectfully supports this legislation.