

April 14, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Democratic Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
Chairman  
Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy & Commerce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation  
U.S. Senate  
Washington D.C 20510

The Honorable Greg Walden  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy & Commerce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington D.C 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Senator Schumer, Congressman McCarthy, Chairman Wicker, Chairman Pallone, Senator Cantwell, and Congressman Walden:

We write to strongly urge you to include language that would repeal Section 6103 in Title VI of P.L. 112-96 in legislation addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. Such language will prevent the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) from being forced to auction and clear public safety communications from critical spectrum known as the T-Band (470 MHz-512 MHz). The mandate requires the FCC to begin an auction by February 21, 2021. Emergency medical service (EMS), fire department, and law enforcement personnel, among others are currently working to keep their communities safe and healthy during the COVID-19 crisis. In eleven major U.S. metropolitan areas including New York and Los Angeles, these frontline responders rely on the T-Band to respond to calls for emergency assistance.<sup>1</sup> We urge Congress to protect this robust response infrastructure by repealing the T-Band auction mandate in COVID-19 legislation.

In eleven major metropolitan areas, T-Band systems support public safety voice communications. Local public safety agencies have used billions of dollars in federal, state, and local taxpayer funds over the past five decades to build sophisticated communications systems designed to meet the needs of the public during crises. Using the T-Band, 911 telecommunicators dispatch first responders to people in need; EMS teams speak to each other; and firefighters call for mutual aid. It is expected to cost \$5 to \$6 billion for

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<sup>1</sup> The affected metropolitan areas by population are New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston, Washington, D.C, Miami, Philadelphia, Boston, San Francisco, and Pittsburgh.

public safety users to move off the spectrum, and auction proceeds are not expected to be sufficient to cover these costs.<sup>2</sup> Of the eleven affected areas, five cities do not have alternative spectrum options.

Repealing the T-Band auction mandate is a public safety imperative requiring action from Congress. In June 2019, the Government Accountability Office released a study on the impact of the T-Band auction on first responder capabilities. The report found that, without access to the T-Band, public safety agencies may not be able to maintain communications or communications interoperability. The GAO recommended that Congress consider allowing public safety organizations to continue operating in the T-Band. In a public statement on December 2, 2019, FCC Chairman Ajit Pai agreed that the T-Band auction mandate “could deprive first responders of their current ability to communicate by radio” and concluded that “moving forward is not viable.”<sup>3</sup>

In communities across the country, T-Band users are on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, responding to emergency calls and saving lives. The T-Band spectrum underpins their heroic response efforts and will continue to do so as they strive to protect our communities from future risks. We ask Congress to include the *Don’t Break Up the T-Band Act* (S. 2748/H.R. 451) in any legislative response to this ongoing crisis in order to preserve access to this critical communications resource.

Sincerely,

International Association of Fire Chiefs  
International Association of Fire Fighters  
National League of Cities  
U.S. Council of Mayors  
National Sheriffs’ Association  
Major Cities Chiefs Association  
Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials International  
Congressional Fire Services Institute  
Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts  
Massachusetts METROFIRE  
Greater Boston Police Council  
National Public Safety Telecommunications Council  
Los Angeles Regional Interoperable Communications System  
Interagency Communications Interoperability Authority of California  
Enterprise Wireless Alliance  
Metro-Boston Urban Area Security Initiative  
City of Cambridge Public Safety

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<sup>2</sup> Government Accountability Office, Required Auction of Public Safety Spectrum Could Harm First Responder Capabilities, June 21, 2019. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/699916.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> FCC News Release “Chairman Pai Calls on Congress to Protect Public Safety and Repeal T-Band Mandate.” <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-361103A1.pdf>.