



Ohio Legislative Service Commission

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Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

Bill: [H.B. 223 of the 129th G.A.](#)

Date: June 13, 2011

Status: As Introduced

Sponsor: Rep. B. Patmon

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

Contents: Requires certification of emergency service telecommunicators

State Fiscal Highlights

- The bill increases the administrative burden of the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to oversee the certification of emergency service telecommunicators. Although ODE is currently responsible for a voluntary certification system, the bill makes the certification mandatory, which is likely to increase the number of individuals obtaining certification.
- Based on the cost of current training courses, the one-time initial cost of certifying all working telecommunicators, assuming none are currently certified under the voluntary system, is approximately \$1.35 million to \$1.67 million.
- The annual cost of training new employees and providing continuing education for current employees to maintain certification is approximately \$175,000 to \$217,000.
- Although the bill states that training is to be offered at no cost to telecommunicators or their employers, the bill does not appropriate funds for these costs.

Local Fiscal Highlights

- The bill does not appear to require emergency service providers to pay for the certification of their employees. However, if providers do compensate employees in some way for their certification costs, their expenses are likely to increase.

Detailed Fiscal Analysis

Background

Continuing law allows a person to obtain certification as an emergency service telecommunicator by completing an approved course of basic training conducted by either the State Board of Education, an emergency service provider, or a career school. The course includes instruction on a variety of subjects, including the role of emergency service telecommunicators, effective communication skills, and emergency service telecommunicator liability. In order to be certified, telecommunicators are currently required to receive at least 40 hours of instruction initially and then eight hours of continuing education every two years. However, under current law, individuals are not required to be certified to be employed as emergency service telecommunicators.

Under continuing law, the instruction offered by the State Board is to be provided at no cost to the student or the student's employer. This instruction and the certification process are supported by the Emergency Service Telecommunicator Training Fund (Fund 4M40), which was created in 1997. Fund 4M40 received cash transfers from the GRF. From FY 1999 through FY 2001, Fund 4M40 had expenditures totaling nearly \$413,000, over half of which occurred in the first year. Since FY 2002, however, Fund 4M40, and, therefore, the training program and the certification process, have not been funded. According to the Ohio Chapter of the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (OAPCO), training for telecommunicators has mostly been conducted by the telecommunicators' employers in-house.

The bill

The bill modifies the basic course to require that it consist of between 40 and 60 hours of instruction or training, that, at a minimum, conform to Project 33 Revised Minimum Training Standards for Public Safety of the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO). The bill specifies that the course also include instruction in the protocol for submerged vehicle situations and other situations where an individual's life is immediately endangered. The State Board, in developing the protocol, is required to consult the state training requirements established for peace officers, emergency medical service personnel, and firefighters. Finally, the bill prohibits an emergency service provider from employing a telecommunicator who is not certified, thus making the certification mandatory.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) will likely experience an increase in administrative burden in modifying the course requirements and in overseeing the certification process. Moving from voluntary to mandatory certification will likely increase the number of individuals obtaining certification, adding to ODE's administrative costs. The more significant costs of the bill, however, arise from the cost of providing the training to all telecommunicators.

APCO offers a basic training course that exceeds the Project 33 Revised Standards. This course includes 40 hours of classroom time and is offered for about \$310, an average of \$7.75 per hour, per participant. It is not clear if this course includes all the training units required by the bill, but it may provide a reasonable cost estimate for a similar course that meets the bill's requirements. Butler Tech, a joint vocational school district in Hamilton, Ohio, also offers a 40-hour course for about \$385, an average of \$9.62 per hour, including tuition and fees. According to the Ohio Job and Family Services Bureau of Labor Market Information's "Occupational Employment Projections Report," there are approximately 4,350 telecommunicators employed in Ohio, with about 130 new openings each year. The one-time cost of the initial certification, therefore, may be from about \$1.35 million (4,350 x \$310) to \$1.67 million (4,350 x \$385). This cost may be lower, however, since it is likely that some of the existing telecommunicators working in Ohio already meet the qualifications for certification and would not need to be retrained. The annual cost of certifying the approximately 130 new employees each year may be from about \$40,000 (130 x \$310) to \$50,000 (130 x \$385). In addition, certified employees would need to take another eight hours of instruction every two years, or, on average, four hours every year. Assuming this instruction can be provided at the same hourly rate as the initial instruction (\$7.75 to \$9.63), this continuing education may cost from about \$135,000 to \$167,000 per year.

Under the bill, as under current law, the State Board is to provide the training at no cost to the emergency service provider or its employees. So, apparently the costs of the bill are to be borne by the state. However, as mentioned previously, the program has not been funded since FY 2002 and the bill does not appropriate any funding for it. If the training is not paid for by the state, presumably the telecommunicators themselves will be responsible for the cost of obtaining and maintaining their own certification. The bill does not appear to require emergency service providers to pay for the certification of their employees. However, if providers do compensate employees in some way for their certification costs, or if they choose to provide an updated or expanded training in-house, their expenses are likely to increase.