

House Bill HJ 14

Good afternoon, my name is Shaylyne Fisher, Public Safety Telecommunicator of Richland County Sheriff's Office. Many states including Montana still recognize that I and many others like me are clerical work. Clerical work could not be farther from what I do every day when I come to work. Every day I am the calm voice on the other end of the phone when someone is calling 911, never knowing what I am going to hear.

When someone calls for police, fire, or EMS assistance I am the first person they speak to and sometimes the last. People call when they are having the worst day of their life or when they just don't know who else to call. Many times we hear things that would send most people running and they would never turn back. Most people wouldn't want to be the first call when someone has found their loved one has committed suicide, that their husband has been hitting them and they locked themselves in a separate room to hide, or that a young child has drowned. Many times callers are frantic and can't think properly, so we are required to stay calm and help reassure them all well we get the location, vital information, and officers, deputies, firemen, or EMTs going.

We are the first person an officer tells where they are when they stop a vehicle, never knowing what they are walking into. Every time an officer checks out on a traffic stop or a call that we don't have much information on, I pray that everything turns out okay and that that officer is able to still go home to his\her family and that the citizens we are serving are getting the help they need.

Every day I come to work not knowing what my day will be like. Sometimes it's answering 2 calls the entire time I am there and other times answering back to back 911 lines and non-emergency lines. Some days I hear the most terrifying things and don't always get to know the outcome of the call and what happened, after imagining the worst.

I have missed holidays, family dinners\gatherings, and birthdays for my nephews because I am at work serving my community with my fellow first responders. I almost never work a typical Monday- Friday job. Coming in at midnight to assist another Telecommunicator, knowing I still have to work a shift later that afternoon, many times on little to no sleep.

Many times people don't know what a Telecommunicator is due to us still being recognized as clerical workers and not first responders. Many people would not be able to do what we do, causing short staffing and more stressful hours for everyone involved. I hope that you will pass this bill so that Telecommunicators across Montana, including myself, can be recognized as what we are. We are the first, first responder.