

Testimony of

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on

Legislative Improvements to Public Safety Communications in the United States

Before the

House Energy and Commerce Committee

Subcommittee on Communications and Technology

December 16, 2025

Chairman Hudson, Ranking Member Matsui, Chairman Guthrie, Ranking Member Pallone, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of CTIA and the U.S. wireless communications industry. As a former Vice President of Regulatory Affairs at CTIA who presently serves as outside counsel to the association on public safety issues, I know how grateful the U.S. wireless industry is for your longstanding, bipartisan leadership to strengthen our nation's emergency communications, alerting, and resiliency capabilities.

Americans rely on wireless in the moments that matter most. Whether we need help responding to a life-threatening situation or we are reacting to a lifesaving alert during a fast-changing disaster event, wireless communications are often the first and sometimes the only connection between Americans and the emergency response heroes that keep us safe every day.

Wireless communications are at the center of our nation's public safety infrastructure and reinforce why resiliency, reliability, and continuous investment and innovation remain core priorities for the U.S. wireless industry. We are proud of our role in providing critical public safety communications across America and continue to invest in technology, tools, and solutions that will further enhance our nation's public safety services.

Today, we welcome the opportunity to highlight a few of the U.S. wireless industry's recent achievements in public safety, as well as our thoughts on how the bills you will consider during this hearing can enhance our efforts to continue delivering innovative and reliable emergency connections when Americans need it most.

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The Wireless Industry Is Committed to Reliable and Resilient Communications

The U.S. wireless industry is committed to building and delivering the most robust wireless networks in the world. Last year alone, wireless providers invested nearly \$30 billion in their networks to expand capacity and coverage, strengthen infrastructure, deploy innovative technologies, and install more backup power to help maintain wireless service under extraordinary conditions.ⁱ

Wireless providers prepare extensively for the challenges of hurricane season, wildfires, and other major events. Before a disaster hits, wireless providers' preparedness and response teams fortify critical cell sites with backup power to maintain services and ensure portable cell sites and power generators are available to be deployed. To support communities recovering from a disaster, providers work side-by-side with local emergency officials and electric power companies to restore power and fiber backhaul services to cell sites, deploy innovative solutions, like "Flying COWs," to provide connectivity in hard-hit areas, and support communities with free-charging stations and other resources. These efforts are closely aligned with the Federal Communications Commission's ("FCC") Mandatory Disaster Response Initiative, which codified the 2016 Wireless Resiliency Cooperative Framework developed by CTIA and wireless providers to enhance wireless network resiliency through industry-led preparation and collaboration.

One of the most effective ways to maintain wireless services throughout a disaster is ensuring the availability of fiber backhaul connections and access to re-fuel portable generators at critical cell sites during extended power outages. Through direct engagement and collaboration with federal, state, and local officials, electric power companies and other communications providers, wireless providers are continuing to build relationships and develop

best practices that are enhancing our ability to maintain wireless services and speed restoration efforts during disaster events.

With more than 447,000 active cell sites across the U.S. providing overlapping coverage and diverse resiliency solutions, it is typical for the vast majority of cell sites to remain online throughout a disaster event.ⁱⁱ This resiliency and redundancy is the result of sustained planning, collaboration, and investments designed to ensure that wireless service is available when Americans need it most to connect with emergency responders.

Wireless Connects Americans to 911 and 988

Wireless is Americans' primary on-ramp to 911 emergency services nationwide. There are more than 240 million calls to 911 each year and four out of five of them originate from wireless devices—making wireless a central element of the nation's 911 ecosystem.ⁱⁱⁱ Wireless providers have spent much of the last decade investing and deploying the most innovative, commercially available solutions to ensure that emergency responders have the actionable information they need to help. Today, wireless providers deliver location information estimates to local emergency communications centers ("ECC") within one city block and within three floors of multi-story buildings for more than 80 percent of all wireless 911 calls, improving response times and situational awareness for first responders.

As Americans' use of wireless communications continues to evolve, wireless providers have delivered new solutions, like text-to-911, that expand the availability of 911 services—oftentimes when voice calls are not safe, accessible, or available. After more than a decade of planning, technology development, and testing, the transition to Next Generation 911 ("NG911") is also well underway. Under a uniform, nationwide deployment framework adopted by the FCC,

wireless providers are actively partnering with 911 Authorities and local ECCs to deliver wireless 911 traffic in formats that can enhance the reliability and interoperability of our nation’s 911 system.

Wireless providers are also proud to support nationwide access to 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (“Lifeline”). This service is a profound example of Congressional leadership. The National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020, championed by this Committee, created a simple, memorable number that connects people in crisis with trained counselors through voice or text. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, nearly 20 million contacts have been made to crisis centers since its launch in 2022. And in October 2025, approximately 550,000 contacts were made to 988 via calls and texts.^{iv}

Most recently, the wireless industry successfully developed a georouting framework in collaboration with the Lifeline Administrator that enables the Lifeline to more accurately route wireless 988 voice calls to appropriate local crisis centers. Nationwide wireless providers are now providing georouting information to the Lifeline with wireless 988 voice calls, and non-nationwide wireless providers will do so by December 14, 2026. CTIA appreciates the Committee’s foresight in making 988 a reality and is committed to supporting its continued success for people in crisis.

Wireless Emergency Alerts Keep American Communities Safe

Wireless Emergency Alerts (“WEA”) are among the most powerful alert and warning tools available to protect the public when emergencies unfold. Since their launch in 2012, alert originators—the federal, state, and local emergency officials authorized by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”)—have issued more than 96,000 WEAs, each one

intended to give people the time and information they need to stay safe, whether that involves taking shelter from severe weather, evacuating from a fast-moving wildfire, or helping locate a missing child.^v WEAs have saved lives, and as wireless networks and alerting systems have continued to evolve, WEAs' reach and effectiveness have continued to grow, too.

WEA is a one-way cell broadcast system designed to maximize the likelihood that alerts are delivered to all capable devices in an area targeted by an alert originator. This simple but effective design enables alert originators to rapidly and reliably deliver emergency information that saves lives, even when demand on the network is at its highest. In fact, FCC test data demonstrates that WEA alert receipt rates exceed 90% and continue to increase year-over-year.^{vi}

With respect to whether to send WEAs, where to send WEAs, and what to say in WEA messages, those decisions are made by authorized federal, state, or local alert originators, and wireless companies provide the means for alert originators to distribute those messages. Recognizing the importance of WEA to our nation's emergency alert system, the wireless industry works closely with FEMA and the FCC to improve geographic precision of WEAs, enabling clearer and more detailed messages, and providing alert originators with the flexibility to convey relevant and timely information that is specific to the emergency.

We know how critical WEA messages can be, and the consequences can be devastating when WEA messages are delayed or not sent at all. To that end, CTIA strongly supports ongoing alert originator training, coordination, and best-practice development, as well as innovative solutions that alert originators can use to ensure that WEA continues to be a reliable, trusted, and life-saving tool for communities nationwide.

Legislation in Today's Hearing

The transition to a modern, interoperable, and resilient NG911 system is essential to maintaining and enhancing public safety, as Congress, federal and state agencies, local public safety officials, and the wireless industry have recognized for over a decade. The Next Gen 9-1-1 Act, sponsored by Chairman Hudson and Representative Carter, and the Public Safety Communications Act, sponsored by Representative Cammack, offer roadmaps to ensure the federal government has the expertise and resources necessary to help state and local public safety stakeholders expedite and complete the transition to NG911. CTIA supports the goals of these bills and welcomes Congressional leadership to establish a national, uniform framework for the NG911 transition.

LuLu's Law, sponsored by Representative Palmer, and the Mystic Alert Act, sponsored by Representative Pfluger, recognize the importance of alert originators using WEAs to keep us safe from a wide array of emergency events, including in rural and remote areas. The wireless industry stands ready to support the Committee's legislative efforts and further enable alert originators to address evolving threats by effectively using WEA.

Finally, the Emergency Reporting Act, sponsored by Ranking Member Matsui and Representative Billirakis, would require the FCC to produce an annual report that highlights the efforts and best practices of communications providers to respond to disaster events, as well as evaluate the feasibility of enhancing public safety agencies' situational awareness of reportable outages impacting communication services. As resiliency is a core priority of the wireless industry, CTIA and its member companies welcome the opportunity to engage in a collaborative

discussion with the Committee to ensure that the FCC's evaluations of these issues are reflective of the full scope and scale of the wireless industry's ability to respond to diverse disaster events.

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Wireless is central to our nation's emergency communications ecosystem. The work that the U.S. wireless industry undertakes to invest in network resiliency, enhance the capabilities of 911 and 988, and support the timely and effective use of WEA reflects our shared commitment with the Committee and public safety officials across the U.S. to ensure that all Americans can access help and critical information when that help is most urgently needed. CTIA and its member companies are grateful for the Subcommittee's continued leadership on these issues and welcome the opportunity to work with Congress and our federal, state, and local partners in public safety to further strengthen and modernize the systems that protect American communities nationwide.

ⁱ *Summary of CTIA's Annual Wireless Industry Survey*, CTIA, at 1 (2025), <https://api.ctia.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/2025-CTIA-Survey-Summary-and-Background.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ *Id.*

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Wireless Industry: Industry Data*, CTIA, <https://www.ctia.org/the-wireless-industry/infographics-library> (last visited Dec. 13, 2025).

^{iv} *988 Lifeline Performance Metrics*, SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION, <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/988/performance-metrics> (Nov. 14, 2025).

^v See *Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)*, FCC (Sept. 25, 2025), <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/wireless-emergency-alerts>.

^{vi} *Report: October 4, 2023 Nationwide Emergency Alert Test*, FCC, at 5 (June 27, 2024); *Wireless Emergency Alerts: September 2022 WEA Performance Exercise*, FCC, at 2 (Apr. 24, 2023); *Wireless Emergency Alerts: August 11, 2021 Nationwide WEA Test Report*, FCC, at 9 (Dec. 30, 2021).