

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Markup of 6 Bills

January 15, 2026

I am pleased the Subcommittee is holding this markup of six bills to improve our nation's public safety communications capabilities.

Americans make roughly a quarter billion calls to 9-1-1 every year, and the proportion of those calls that originate from wireless phones continues to rise as more households abandon landline phone service. While wireless technology continues to progress in its ability to deliver reliable dispatchable location information to 9-1-1 centers, this trend away from landline service puts more pressure on public safety telecommunicators to obtain a caller's whereabouts from the caller directly.

Whether a person calling 9-1-1 is not familiar with the area, doesn't speak the same language as the dispatcher, or is in a state of distress preventing them from describing their location or emergency, it is clear that there are still significant gaps in our emergency communications capabilities that delay emergency response and put more lives at risk. Each of these circumstances, and many others, can be improved upon in an end-to-end Next Generation 9-1-1 environment. Too many emergency communications centers lack modern communications capabilities, and many communities lack the resources to make these necessary investments without our help. So, I commend Chairman Hudson and Representative Troy Carter for their leadership of this effort and look forward to supporting its passage.

I am also glad to see two bills led by Ranking Member Matsui and Representative Bilirakis included in this markup. The Emergency Reporting Act will improve processes at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to assess communications failures caused by natural disasters like hurricanes and wildfires. This effort is a critical step to ensure that policymakers and regulators are equipped with detailed information to identify trends and inform efforts to address points of vulnerability in preparation for future disasters.

The Kari's Law Reporting Act is an important bill that follows up on legislation that came through this Committee and was signed into law in 2018. The original Kari's Law was prompted by the tragic story of a young child unable to reach 9-1-1 during what became a fatal domestic dispute in a hotel room because the child was not aware she needed to dial a prefix to place an external call. The victim's daughter did exactly as she was taught and correctly dialed 9-1-1, but that one digit ultimately left the victim, Kari Hunt, without access to help when it mattered most.

Kari's Law requires providers of multi-line telephone systems, which serve entities like office buildings and hotels, to reconfigure their systems to enable callers to simply dial 9-1-1

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without a prefix to reach emergency assistance. Today, however, it is evident that providers have yet to fully comply with Kari's Law, so the legislation before us will provide Congress and the FCC with the tools necessary to track down delinquent providers and ensure they comply with the law so that tragedies like that of Kari Hunt do not happen again.

I appreciate the bipartisan cooperation that went into bringing these bills up today, and I yield back the balance of my time.