KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH

144 North Binkley Street • Soldotna, Alaska 99669-7520
Toll-free within the Borough: 1-800-478-4441
PHONE: (907) 262-4441 • FAX: (907) 262-1892
www.borough.kenai.ak.us

DAVID R. CAREY
BOROUGH MAYOR

March 8, 2010

The Honorable Bob Herron
House of Representatives
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Representative Herron:

On behalf of the Soldotna Public Safety Communications Center and the Kenai Peninsula Borough, I would like to convey my professional opinion regarding HB 361, an Act mandating emergency dispatchers to attain and maintain CPR certification.

Public safety dispatchers fulfill a vital role in the public safety system. They are expected to make decisions regarding critical incidents on a regular and routine basis; decisions which may be a matter of life and death. In Alaska, public safety dispatchers make these decisions without the benefit of mandatory minimum training standards.

CPR training and certification is essential, although this does not sufficiently prepare a public safety dispatcher to provide CPR instructions over the phone. Guiding a caller through a medical procedure requires that an approved Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) program be in place.

In a public safety arena where most service providers—police, fire service, and EMS—are required to obtain and maintain minimum training standards; public safety dispatchers have been largely ignored or overlooked. Currently, there is no Alaskan governmental body or agency that prescribes, provides or regulates training of public safety dispatchers in the basic functions of their jobs. Instead, individual departments must establish their own training standards. The amount or type of training is left to the subjective decision of management.

Regardless of the level of training received, well-trained dispatchers and their poorly-trained counter-parts answer the same types of emergency calls. They must each make the same decisions and judgment calls that eventually determine the level and type of service a caller will receive. The establishment of state-wide minimum training standards would facilitate uniformity of basic training across all regions of our State.

Mandated CPR certification does not address the root cause of the problems we face in public safety dispatch.

Sincerely,

David R. Carey

David R. Carey, Kenai Peninsula Borough Mayor

cc: Representative Anna Fairclough
Representative Cathy Munoz
Representative John Harris
Representative Wes Keller
Representative Charisse Millett
Representative Sharon Cissna
Representative Berta Gardner