**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 23‑1‑325 SO AS TO DESIGNATE CERTAIN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY PROVIDERS AS BEING FIRST RESPONDERS; TO AMEND SECTION 23‑47‑10, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO DEFINITIONS CONCERNING PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS CENTERS, SO AS TO DEFINE CERTAIN TERMS; AND TO AMEND SECTION 23‑47‑20, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO 911 SYSTEMS REQUIREMENTS, SECTION 23‑47‑40, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO 911 SYSTEMS FUNDING, AND SECTION 23‑47‑80, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO PENALTIES, ALL SO AS TO MAKE CONFORMING CHANGES.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Chapter 47, Title 23 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 23‑1‑325. (A) The following are designated first responders in this State:

(1) law enforcement officers;

(2) firefighters, including volunteer firefighters;

(3) corrections officers;

(4) public safety telecommunicators, as defined in Section 23‑47‑20;

(5) emergency medical technicians, emergency medical responders, and paramedics;

(6) individuals who perform emergency management services subject to the order or control of, or under a request of, the State, a political subdivision of the State, or a public school district; and

(7) any individual who:

(a) serves in an employee capacity or a volunteer capacity for a public safety agency; and

(b) whose duties include rapid emergency response.

(B) The designation of a person as a first responder pursuant to subsection (A) does not affect his terms of employment or volunteer status, including:

(1) assigned duties and responsibilities;

(2) contract terms;

(3) personnel classifications;

(4) merit or nonmerit employee status; or

(5) eligibility or lack of eligibility for compensation, reimbursement, benefits, allowances, or worker’s compensation.”

SECTION 2. Section 23‑47‑10 of the 1976, as last amended by Act 60 of 2019, is further amended by adding an appropriately numbered item at the end to read:

“( ) ‘Public safety telecommunicator’ means an individual at a public safety answering point who receives 911 calls and in response either may dispatch public safety services or extend, transfer, or relay 911 calls to appropriate public safety agencies.”

SECTION 3. Section 23‑47‑10(26) of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 60 of 2019, is further amended to read:

“(26) ‘Public safety agent’ means a functional agency which provides fire fighting, law enforcement, medical, public safety telecommunicator, or other emergency services.”

SECTION 4. Section 23‑47‑20(15) of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 60 of 2019, is further amended to read:

“(15) for both legacy and NG9‑1‑1, ~~telecommunication operators or dispatchers~~ public safety telecommunicators trained, or certified by the Law Enforcement Training Council (Criminal Justice Academy). The Law Enforcement Training Council shall promulgate regulations to provide for this training and/or certification. Expense of the training must be paid by the local government by which that person is employed. The Law Enforcement Training Council is authorized to establish, collect, and retain a fee not to exceed actual costs for this training or certification, or both;”

SECTION 5. Section 23‑47‑40(C)(2) of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 60 of 2019, is further amended to read:

“(2) hiring or compensating ~~dispatchers or call takers~~ public safety telecommunicators other than initial and in‑service training;”

SECTION 6. Section 23‑47‑80 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 60 of 2019, is further amended to read:

“Section 23‑47‑80. It is unlawful for a person anonymously or otherwise to:

(1) use any words or language of a profane, vulgar, lewd, lascivious, or indecent nature on an emergency 911 number with the intent to intimidate or harass a ~~dispatcher~~ public safety telecommunicator;

(2) contact the emergency 911 number, whether or not conversation ensues for the purpose of annoying or harassing ~~the dispatcher~~ a public safety telecommunicator or interfering with or disrupting emergency 911 service;

(3) make contact with a ~~911 dispatcher~~ public safety telecommunicator and intentionally fail to hang up or disengage the connection for the purpose of interfering with or disrupting emergency service;

(4) contact the emergency 911 number and intentionally make a false report.

A person who violates the provisions of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be imprisoned not more than six months or fined not more than two hundred dollars, or both.”

SECTION 7. This act takes effect upon approval of the Governor.

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