

ENROLLED ORIGINAL

A RESOLUTION

25-223

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

July 11, 2023

To declare the existence of an emergency with respect to the need to amend the Office of Unified Communications Establishment Act of 2004 to require the Office of Unified Communications to collect and post publicly on the Office’s website the number of calls eligible to be diverted to alternative responses, the number of those calls diverted, and data on daily call-taking and dispatching operations; and to amend section 16-1053 of the District of Columbia Official Code to add a representative of the Office of Unified Communications as a member of the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “Office of Unified Communications Transparency and Accuracy Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2023”.

Sec. 2. (a) In recent years, local residents and advocates have called for greater oversight over the District’s 911 call center. Lengthy delays in call and dispatch response times, plus a general lack of accountability, have been cited as preeminent concerns facing the dispatch center, part of the District’s Office of Unified Communications (“OUC”).

(b) In March 2023, the District of Columbia Auditor reported that the District’s 911 call center suffered from a lack of proper supervision and mistakes such as frequent misrouted calls. Stories about errors and other issues with 911 and EMS dispatching have been reported widely to the media, including instances in which at least 2 District residents have died due to a lack of medical care.

(c) Although every OUC call taker and dispatcher has recently undergone re-training, the agency remains significantly understaffed. Because of hiring challenges and vacancies in the call center, current staff are often overworked, and residents report wait times that both exceed best practices and national averages. It is critical that the District take immediate action to address hiring and retention challenges at OUC to ensure our emergency response apparatus is providing timely, appropriate service to residents in need.

(d) The Office of Unified Communications Establishment Act of 2004, effective December 7, 2004 (D.C. Law 15-205; D.C. Official Code § 1-327.51 *et seq.*) (“Act”), established basic parameters for OUC operations. The emergency measures would amend the Act to allow the District to better identify errors and other improvements.

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(e) Specifically, the measures require that OUC regularly publish call data on its website, including descriptions of errors, number of shifts operated under minimum staffing levels, average and maximum call to answer times, average and maximum answer to dispatch times, number of calls in the queue for over 15 seconds, number of calls dropped following a queue time of over 15 seconds, and the number and type of 911 misuse calls. This language was introduced as part of a permanent bill, the Office of Unified Communications Transparency and Accuracy Amendment Act of 2023, as introduced on June 15, 2023 (Bill 25-344). Moving these measures on an emergency basis is necessary to ensure that these reporting requirements go into effect before the end of this summer, as permanent legislation likely will not be effective until early 2024 at the earliest. Having these provisions in effect this year will ensure the Council can best track whether OUC is consistently and adequately responding to emergency dispatch calls, as well as track other critical accountability measures.

Sec. 3. The Council determines that the circumstances enumerated in section 2 constitute emergency circumstances making it necessary that the Office of Unified Communications Transparency and Accuracy Emergency Amendment Act of 2023 be adopted after a single reading.

Sec. 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.