

Dear Rep. Schenck,

I am writing to urge you to amend HB 1227 that will be heard in your Health and Human Services Committee next week. This bill amends the Denise Amber Lee Act to mandate uniform training and certification of all Florida 9-1-1 call takers and dispatchers. Denise was my wife and as you may remember when we were in Tallahassee speaking before committees two years ago, she was kidnapped, raped, and murdered because a 9-1-1 call from a bystander witnessing her abduction was never transmitted to dispatch for road deputies to pursue. They had her saved! They knew her exact location but because the call taker was uncomfortable entering calls into her CAD system for failsafe dispatch, Denise was found two days later in a shallow grave leaving behind a loving husband and two little boys.

I readily acknowledge that current staffing in many 9-1-1 communications centers around the state require that “occasionally” sworn law enforcement officers need to fill in to insure coverage of 9-1-1 telephone lines. I also have met with FDLE and FPCA officials and admit that the training sworn law enforcement receive is duplicative in many areas of the 232 hour telecommunicator course. But, the “hands on” component of entering calls appropriately and rapidly into the CAD system and transferring of calls efficiently IS NOT included in the sworn officer coursework. FDLE has done a fine job of comparison of the two curriculums and has developed a 40 hour bridge course which includes a 20 hour “hands on” component missing from the sworn officer coursework. PLEASE AMEND HB 1227 TO AT LEAST INCLUDE THIS 20 HOUR HANDS ON COMPONENT FOR ALL SWORN LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS CHOSEN TO AS TEMPORARY 9-1-1 TELECOMMUNICATORS. This inability and unfamiliarity with the use of the CAD system is EXACTLY what allowed Denise to be murdered. The call taker in her case was confused and untrained with entering call details into the CAD and instead would write the call details on a piece of paper and yell them across the room to the dispatchers. Each dispatcher thought the other one had dispatched the call but because the call was never entered in the CAD, there was no failsafe method of knowing. In fact it was never dispatched and Denise and her killer drove right by as many as 4 road deputies on their way to her final terrifying moments on Earth.

EVERYONE who takes a screaming mothers plea for help needs to have this valuable “hands on” training component whether they pass the state telecommunicator certification exam or not. If it is not in this bill it will not be done and some other Florida citizen will die and Florida will again be highlighted in the national media as a horrifying example of 9-1-1 system failure. A medical doctor can pass a medical board exam on how to perform a heart bypass but no sensible person would allow them to actually attempt the surgery without extensive hands on training with a cadaver and surgical instruments. It is no different with the first person a Florida citizen reaches out to in the worst moment of their life, the 9-1-1 call taker.

Pass HB 1227 but PLEASE make sure that all citizens are getting a fully trained person that can efficiently and rapidly access the tools at hand for a successful outcome. Amend the current bill to require all temporary sworn law enforcement officers working as temporary 9-1-1 telecommunicators to successfully complete, at least, the 20 hours of “hands on” coursework developed by FDLE.

Thank You,
Nathan Lee
Husband of Denise

Mark Lee
Father-in-law of Denise

Peggy Lee
Mother-in-law of Denise