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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## ***Cumberland County Files Lawsuit against Telephone Service Providers for \$6.7 Million Owed for Vital 911 Services***

**Cumberland County, PA** ---Cumberland County has announced it is filing a lawsuit against 22 telephone service providers in Pennsylvania for failing to bill, collect, and remit the proper 911 assessment charges that help fund Cumberland County 911 operations. The lawsuit seeks to recover 6 years of alleged under-billings, a total of nearly \$6.7 million for Cumberland County. Cumberland County is one of 12 counties in Pennsylvania engaged in a contract to research their potential losses.

Cumberland obtained data through Phone Recovery Services, a telecommunications firm specializing in analyzing 911 system remittances. According to the data, 22 known telephone service providers have been misrepresenting the types and number of phone lines upon which the 911 assessments are applied and are significantly under-billing customers. This misrepresentation ultimately results in significantly less funding for the Cumberland County 911 system.

Over the past 6 years Cumberland County has utilized \$11,271,864 of its General Fund to offset the deficit between revenues and expenses. This is an average of \$1,878,644 per year of the local tax dollars contributed to support its 911 system. A revenue gap of \$6,736,104 was identified that would have been directly applied to the 911 system if it were received, thus a reduction in the amount of County General Fund dollars required to \$4,535,760 an average of \$755,960 per year.

The lawsuit seeks to recover 6 years of under-billings, a total of nearly \$6.7 million. Through the lawsuit, Cumberland County hopes to recoup the funds owed to the County and to allow its 911 Operations Center to continue to operate with the same efficiency and with the state of the art equipment they currently utilize to protect residents.

According to Roger Schneider, founder and president of Phone Recovery Services, confidentiality provisions and the lack of public audit authorization in 911 laws in many states, allow telephone service providers to keep these under-billing practices from being detected. The real driver is that they're under tremendous competitive pressure since the break-up of the Bell system to retain their customers or win new ones that are increasingly shopping almost exclusively on price.

“What is most unfair is a residential customer often ends up paying more than a business. For example, a residential customer with one house line, one home business line and three cell phones in the family, pays \$5 a month, or \$1 per line, in total 911 fees, but a large business 300 lines each capable of calling 911 is being charged only \$3 a month,” said Schneider. “To be clear, it’s not the fault of any business as they are just paying the bill received. These billing practices, however, are completely illogical, unfair and indefensible. The telephone service providers know it, yet they continue to do it the same way. We intend to hold them accountable in court for these actions.”

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