A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF UPGRADING BASE
STATIONS OF THE VOICE INTEROPERABILITY PLAN FOR EMERGENCY
RESPONDERS (VIPER) NETWORK.

Whereas, communication in any emergency is critical to the response of emergency
personnel; and

Whereas, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has caused an
unprecedented spike in the number and complexity of emergency requests from North Carolina
citizens; and

Whereas, our emergency responders depend on a reliable communication network
supported by reliable, state of the art, updated equipment to help in their response to emergencies;
and

Whereas, during this pandemic the citizens of North Carolina depend on their
government to ensure that there is a reliable communication network supported by reliable, state
of the art, updated equipment to allow emergency personnel to respond to their emergency calls
for assistance; and

Whereas, VIPER, Voice Interoperability Plan for Emergency Responders, is the State
of North Carolina's emergency response network; and

Whereas, VIPER includes the VIPER Medical Network, which enables emergency
responders to communicate with hospital emergency rooms; and

Whereas, the Program Evaluation Division of the North Carolina General Assembly
recommended in 2018 that the VIPER network needed funding to update radio equipment and
software to replace outdated equipment no longer supported by the manufacturer; and

Whereas, to this date, only approximately one-third of the funds necessary to replace
this outdated equipment has actually been appropriated; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
Public Safety the sum of nineteen million eight hundred thousand five hundred thirty dollars
($19,800,530) in nonrecurring funds for the 2020-2021 fiscal year to be used for the Voice
Interoperability Plan for Emergency Responders (VIPER) network for continued base station
upgrades (Fund Code 1710).

SECTION 2. If House Bill 966, 2019 Regular Session, becomes law, then any
provision of that act, or the Committee Report described in that act, appropriating or allocating
funds to the Department of Public Safety for the Voice Interoperability Plan for Emergency
Responders (VIPER) network tower hardware upgrades is repealed.

SECTION 3. This act becomes effective July 1, 2020.