

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and Committee-

I'm here today for your consideration for Senate Bill 700, authorizing 911 Specialist to become members of the Law Enforcement Officers Pension System.

911 Communication Specialist work in high-stress environments. They often receive traumatic 911 calls, must be able to make critical, lifesaving decisions, have the ability to remain calm under pressure, and work long and irregular shifts with limited control over the outcome of the 911 incident. They can experience heavy workloads, especially during peak calls times, and must juggle multiple calls at once, which can be mentally and emotionally taxing. Despite all these challenges, 911 Communication Specialists play a vital role as the first, first responder.

Due to the high stress nature of the job, the burnout rate among 911 Communication Specialists is at a high level. Studies have shown that burnout rates among 911 Communication Specialists are higher than those in many other professions. According to the National Emergency Number Association, 60% of 911 professionals reported symptoms of burnout. 911 Communication Specialist often feels unsupported and undervalued.

Recruiting 911 Communication Specialists has become increasingly difficult across the State of Maryland. Currently, all new 911 Communication Specialists in Maryland are required to obtain over 1100 hours of on-the-job training. Compared to other emergency response professions, such as law enforcement, Emergency Medical Clinicians, and Firefighters, the role of a 911 dispatcher is lesser known to the general public. This, along with the stressors of the job, can result in fewer individuals considering dispatching as a career. The stress and demands of the job often times lead to a high turnover rate. This makes it even more difficult on recruitment efforts.

Retaining a dedicated and loyal 911 Communication Specialist is key to any organization. Experienced 911 Communication Specialist have valuable knowledge that can only be gained through years of on-the-job experience. Maryland LEOPS helps attract qualified individuals and encourages experienced 911 Communication Specialist to stay in the profession. It can help attract and retain talent and has positive impacts on the local level. Also, it demonstrates the organization's commitment to supporting its employees' well-being and quality of life. Overall, Maryland LEOPS can be an important tool for managing employees, support employee well-being, and ensure the long-term needs of both the organization and 911 Communication Specialist.

These are just a few of the reasons I ask you to vote yes to Senate Bill 700. Thank you for your time and listening to our profession.