

**SB1034.pdf**

Uploaded by: Mike McKay

Position: FAV

**MIKE MCKAY**  
*Legislative District 1*  
Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties



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Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Executive Nominations Committee

**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

February 23, 2024

RE: Fire/EMS Coalition Support for Senate Bill 1034

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

The Fire/EMS Coalition would like to express their support for Senate Bill 1034: **9-1-1 Specialist Recruitment and Retention Workgroup**. The bill will establish a 9-1-1 Specialist Recruitment and Retention Workgroup. This bill will also require the Workgroup to submit an interim report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on/or before December 1, 2024, and a final report on or before December 1, 2025.

The Fire/EMS Coalition supports Senate Bill 1034 as it will be beneficial to public safety in Maryland through measures to recruit more 9-1-1 dispatchers. Having highly skilled and qualified 9-1-1 dispatchers is essential to public safety in our state. The Coalition supports this bill for the safety and welfare of the general public of Maryland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mike McKay'.

Senator Mike McKay  
Representing the Appalachia Region of Maryland  
Serving Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties

**Voting Organizations:**

**Maryland Fire Chief's Association (MFCA)**  
**Maryland State Firemen's Association (MSFA)**  
**State Fire Marshal (OSFM)**  
**Maryland Fire Rescue Institute (MFRI)**  
**Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services System (MIEMMS)**  
**Metro Fire Chief's Association**  
**Professional Firefighters of Maryland**

**Our Mission Statement**

The Maryland Fire/EMS Coalition unites Republicans and Democrats in support of fire/emergency services legislation that benefit all first responders. Becoming a member does not require taking positions on legislation; rather Coalition members are asked to offer support in a way that best benefits fire/emergency services in their respective Legislative Districts.

# **SB1034 Tanner Jones.pdf**

Uploaded by: Richard Tanner Jones

Position: FAV



# Fruitland Police Department

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Krah J. Plunkert  
Chief of Police

## **Richard Tanner Jones, 911 Police Communications Supervisor Testimony**

### **SB 1034 - 9–1–1 Specialist Recruitment and Retention Workgroup**

#### **Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee**

Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Richard Tanner Jones, and I am a 911 Specialist Supervisor. I am here in support of SB 1034.

The life and job of a 911 Specialist is often chaotic, stressful, and mentally taxing, but I was born to do this job, and I cannot imagine doing anything else. Countless hours of training, rotating shifts, missed family functions, birthdays, holidays, etc. If you ask any 911 Specialist, they will tell you we do not do this job to get rich. We do it because we love it. At 18 years old, I found a job that I was decent at with good benefits and was able to make retirement contributions. I am fortunate to not have many calls that “haunt” me, others however are not as lucky. 911 Specialists spend their career talking to people, often on the worst day of their lives. And when that call is over, another phone line rings and is answered. These calls can take a toll on you over the years, and some things you cannot unhear.

In any career, retirement is the goal. You go to work, you do your best, and at the end of your years of service, you retire. As a 911 Specialist under the current retirement, you will likely have to seek employment either in another field altogether or like many retired dispatchers that I know, seek employment with another agency doing the same thing just to make ends meet.

Even though I will have my 30 years of service in a profession that I love at the age of 48, I will not receive my full benefits. I will have to work an additional 12 years and retire at the age of 60 to receive my full retirement benefits. Instead of working 30 years and retiring, I will have to work 42 years. I love my job, but this problem is a major recruitment and retention issue.

Recruitment and retention for 911 Specialists is extremely difficult for many reasons: the hiring process of vetting candidates, the length of training, the nature of the calls we take, scheduling, etc. We also receive a lower end of the pay scale and a significantly lower retirement percentage compared to our colleagues in Police/Fire/EMT. 911 Specialists work the same shifts, the same calls, and the same holidays but are not given the same benefits as our coworkers. It can and does make many feel like their job is not as valued as other jobs in public safety.

Just in the Fruitland Police Department, in a three-month period two Communications personnel left. This caused an extreme hardship on the Communications Division with personnel covering shifts, time off requests that had already been put in, and it significantly impacted overall mental wellbeing due to exhaustion, but my team rallied, and we came out on top. We are now fully staffed, and my people are happy. We are fortunate to work for the department that we do as our Communications personnel are appreciated by the department and the city. Unfortunately, many centers do not have that same level of appreciation and that is another factor that causes good employees to leave. It is so difficult to keep

good, dedicated employees in this profession. We need to substantially improve the quality of life for our retirees and give some incentive for people to even apply in the first place. I strongly ask you to pass Senate Bill 1034.

**SB1034 testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Robert Phillips

Position: FAV

# Maryland State Firefighters Association

Representing The Volunteer Fire, Rescue, And EMS Personnel of Maryland.



Legislative Committee  
17 State Circle  
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## **SB 1034: 9-1-1 Specialist Recruitment and Retention Workgroup**

My name is Robert Phillips, I am the Legislative Committee Chair for the Maryland State Firefighters Association (MSFA). The MSFA represents the 25,000 plus volunteer Fire/EMS and Rescue first responders across the state.

I wish to present testimony in favor of Senate Bill 1034: 9-1-1 Specialist Recruitment and Retention Workgroup

The MSFA fully supports the adoption of this bill. The MSFA looks at the 9-1-1 Specialist as the first, first responder. These people are the first ones contacted when there is an emergency of any kind. They hear it all from the “cat up a tree” to “my house is on fire” to “someone has been shot” and everything in between. They are the special people who have to make sure everyone they are in contact with understands that they are the most important emergency at the moment and things are going to get better.

There is a shortage of 9-1-1 specialist and we need to address this. I can tell you from having lived it, that “the voice on the other end of the black box” is a special person and we need to make sure we have enough of them to keep all of us safe.

Thank you for your attention to this very important bill and I ask for your favorable report on SB 1034.

I will be glad to answer any questions you may have for me.





**SB 1034 - Carozza Testimony\_FINAL.pdf**

Uploaded by: Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Position: FAV

MARY BETH CAROZZA  
Legislative District 38  
Somerset, Wicomico,  
and Worcester Counties

Education, Energy, and  
the Environment Committee

Executive Nominations Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 29, 2024

The Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
SB 1034 – 9-1-1 Specialist Recruitment and Retention Workgroup  
Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and my fellow members of the esteemed Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee for this opportunity to present Senate Bill 1034 – 9-1-1 Specialist Recruitment and Retention Workgroup. I want to thank Vice Chair Kagan for all of her assistance with this legislation and all of her suggested recommendations have been included in SB 1034.

For the past three years, I have been working with Fruitland Police Chief Plunkert, other local law enforcement, and 9-1-1 Specialists in an effort to allow 9-1-1 Specialists to qualify for the Law Enforcement Officers' Pension System. This would be a major recruitment and retention tool to support our 9-1-1 Specialists. Last week, I introduced and the Senate Budget and Taxation Pensions Subcommittee heard Senate Bill 700 which would give local jurisdictions the option to allow 9-1-1 specialists to qualify for LEOPS. This legislation mirrors SB 368 of 2023 that allowed local jurisdictions to offer LEOPS to emergency medical technicians and was unanimously passed by the Maryland General Assembly last session and signed into law on April 24, 2023. We currently are working with our federal partners to add 9-1-1 Specialists to the definition of "qualified public safety employees" in order for the LEOPS option to go forward for 9-1-1 specialists.

My purpose in sharing this background brings you to Senate Bill 1034 which is focused on a long-term approach in the recruitment and retention of Maryland's 9-1-1 Specialists. This legislation establishes a 9-1-1 Specialist Recruitment and Retention Workgroup to identify and examine recruitment and retention challenges that affect 9-1-1 Specialists in Maryland and make related recommendations. This workgroup approach is similar to the workgroups that the Maryland General Assembly has established for fire and emergency medical services personnel, and for law enforcement. The expectation is that the 9-1-1 Specialists Workgroup will make legislative, budgetary, and other recommendations that will strengthen the recruitment and retention of 9-1-1 specialists.

Our 911 Specialists are an absolute lifeline for police, fire, and EMS personnel and are often overlooked for the important role they play in maintaining public safety. A 911 Specialist is often the first emergency contact for the public in most life and death emergencies. Dispatchers receive frantic calls for help and while remaining calm for the person in distress, determine the nature and classification of the incident in order to provide lifesaving service. They often give CPR instructions, calm individuals contemplating suicide, dispatch the call for service to police, fire, or EMS personnel, and even convince armed suspects to disarm prior to police arrival.

Our 911 dispatchers and operators endure many of the same stresses our officers do, except they do not get closure. Once the cavalry arrives, they are already on the next call, beginning the next lifesaving mission.

Holley Goschke, 911 Division Chief for Talbot County Department of Emergency Services, testified last week that recruiting 911 Communication Specialists has become increasingly difficult across the State of Maryland due to a high burnout rate, the stress and perception of being unsupported and undervalued, and the high number of hours of on-the-job training they are required to complete before being considered full 911 Specialists. These issues impede the ability for the 911 Specialist profession to recruit and retain dedicated people who are desperately needed at these posts.

Senate Bill 1034 is cosponsored by Senator Michael Jackson, Senate Pensions Subcommittee Chair, and Senator Mike McKay, Chair of the Maryland General Assembly's Fire/EMS Coalition. The bill is supported by the Maryland Firefighters Association, the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services System (MIEMMS) and the other voting members of the Fire/EMS Coalition.

I respectfully request a swift and favorable report of Senate Bill 1034 to strengthen recruitment and retention of Maryland's 9-1-1 specialists, the first responders for our first responders.