

SB0081-JPR_MACo_SUP.pdf

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Senate Bill 81

Criminal Law - Interference With a Public Safety Answering Point - Penalties

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: January 16, 2025

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 81, which bolsters protections against cyberattacks targeting 9-1-1 centers, a vital component of Maryland’s emergency response infrastructure. By addressing these evolving threats, the bill enhances the security and stability of the 9-1-1 system, ensuring continued public safety and reliable emergency services.

Maryland’s transition to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) modernizes emergency communication capabilities, enabling faster and more accurate emergency response. However, this advanced system faces significant cybersecurity threats as hackers increasingly target public safety networks. SB 81 strengthens state law by expressly prohibiting acts intended to impair or disrupt 9-1-1 center operations – deterring these malicious attacks and safeguarding Maryland’s 9-1-1 system.

The bill increases penalties for individuals who intentionally disrupt 9-1-1 center operations. By elevating these offenses to felonies with penalties of up to five or ten years of imprisonment and substantial fines, the bill reflects the grave danger these actions pose to public safety.

Counties operate and fund 9-1-1 centers, which safeguard Maryland’s emergency response systems. A cyberattack or disruption at a 9-1-1 center threatens lives, delays critical responses, and undermines community safety. This bill equips counties and the State with additional tools to protect residents and strengthen Maryland’s 9-1-1 infrastructure.

County governments are dedicated to enhancing public safety and protecting the resources counties rely on to serve their communities. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 81.

Testimony - Cyberattacks (Kagan) 2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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SB81: Protecting 9-1-1 Centers from Cyberattacks

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Thursday, January 16, 2025: 1:00 PM

Maryland is among a shrinking number of states that have not yet enacted legislation protecting critical infrastructure from cyberattacks.

This threat is not hypothetical-- in July of 2024, a flawed security update from CrowdStrike caused what is considered to be the [largest IT outage in history](#). It took down hospitals, airports, personal computers, transit systems, and 9-1-1 centers. While this blackout was not caused by an attack, the next one could be.

Cybersecurity companies have blocked billions of attempts to disrupt websites of public safety and other key infrastructure, but they won't always be successful.

We rely on the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA), a federal law passed in 1986. Since then, government has been irresponsibly slow to adapt to the digital age.

SB81 as drafted would explicitly make cyberattacks illegal in Maryland and criminalize any act that intends to or actually interrupts or impairs the functioning of 9-1-1 centers. Thirty-one states already have laws penalizing these crimes.

Penalties proposed by this legislation:

- For an **attempted** cyberattack, imprisonment not exceeding five years and/or a fine of up to \$25,000; and
- For a **successful** cyberattack, imprisonment not exceeding ten years and/or a fine of up to \$50,000.

Similar versions of this bill passed unanimously in the Senate in 2022 and the House in 2023 and 2024.

I urge a favorable report on SB81 to protect the backbone of our public safety system.