

**Written Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
SB 148 - Income Tax - Subtraction Modification - Public Safety Employee Retirement
Income (Supporting Our 9-1-1 Specialists Act)
January 21, 2026**

SUPPORT

Chair Guzzone and members of the Committee, AFT-Maryland asks for a favorable report on SB 148. Maryland has been a leader in reclassifying 9-1-1 Specialists as “first responders” and we now ask that the 9-1-1 Specialists be included in the Hometown Heroes Act.

Today, 9-1-1 Specialists use highly specialized protocols, training and equipment to provide life-saving triage to citizens and vital information to field responders. They initiate medical instructions and play a critical role in emergencies during traffic accidents, commitment of violent crimes, and large-scale disasters.

9-1-1 Specialists must be the calm in the storm. They often perform many functions at one time under stressful conditions. They are responsible for multi-channel radios, telephones and monitoring computer terminals. 9-1-1 Specialists must be able to communicate precisely and clearly in emergency situations, maintaining professionalism at all times.

In a study conducted by the National Library of Medicine¹ - 9-1-1 Specialists were surveyed to better understand the health challenges of their jobs. The results of the study showed that participants exhibited high levels of physical health complaints, depressive symptoms, alcohol abuse, PTSD, psychological inflexibility, and emotion dysregulation, as well as issues with mental distress and dissociation.

Lack of resources, benefits and incentives creates a significant shortage of well-trained and experienced 9-1-1 Specialists. The state needs to do more to recruit and retain personnel for this vital job. We ask for a favorable report. Thank you.

¹ Perez RA, Jetelina KK, Reingle Gonzalez JM. The Chronic Health Effects of Work-Related Stressors Experienced by Police Communications Workers. May 5, 2021.

