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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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**SB658: Maryland Department of Emergency Management - Establishment and Transfer of
Maryland 9-1-1 Board
Senate Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee
Wednesday, February 17, 2021 | 1:00 PM**

This Committee recently heard SB68, which would make the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) into the Maryland **Department** of Emergency Management. For the last three years as [Chair of the NG911 Commission](#), I have struggled to figure out the most efficient and effective emergency management structure for our state. After speaking with legislators who enacted similar changes in their states and collaborating with 9-1-1 Center Directors, the Commission unanimously recommended moving MEMA to an independent entity and placing the 9-1-1 Board (formerly the Emergency Number Systems Board) within MEMA.

Currently, MEMA is located within the Military Department, which can create confusion during an emergency. As a Cabinet-level Department, MEMA would be able to more effectively communicate with the Governor during an emergency. Additionally, the 9-1-1 Board is awkwardly situated with the prison guards as part of the Departments of Public Safety & Correctional Services (DPSCS). For access to critical public safety resources, it makes more sense to house the 9-1-1 Board with other emergency management experts. In 14 other states (AK, CT, GA, ID, IA, LA, MS, ND, OK, OR, PA, VA, WA, and WV.), the 9-1-1 Board is housed within the State's emergency management entity.

One of the key requirements for this move to be successful is the commitment that the 9-1-1 Board would continue to be autonomous. The 9-1-1 revenues could not be used by any other agency for any other purpose. Additionally, MEMA has committed to offering administrative/HR support to the Board to address the disparities in recruiting, training, and retaining 9-1-1 Specialists. MEMA has also offered to help with procurement (see [SB645](#)) and technical expertise on issues like the 9-1-1 Board's online presence. By contrast, DPSCS's website was out of date by a year. (The Commission in no way intends to disparage DPSCS as a parent organization; it was just never a good fit.) This proposal should provide all advantages and no disadvantages.

Shifting the 9-1-1 Board as an autonomous entity within the new Maryland Department of Emergency Management will make more sense and allow both to be more effective.

I urge a favorable report of SB658 so that we can more appropriately support our public safety personnel.