



## **Senate Bill 658**

### *Maryland Department of Emergency Management - Establishment and Transfer of Maryland 9-1-1 Board*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Health, and Environmental  
Affairs Committee

Date: February 17, 2021

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 658. This bill—which is based on recommendations from the Commission to Advance Next Generation 9-1-1 Across Maryland—designates the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) as a forward-facing, Cabinet-level entity, and transfers the 9-1-1 Board from the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to MEMA.

Both MEMA and the 9-1-1 Board provide invaluable assistance, guidance, and leadership to their local partners. By aligning these efforts, SB 658 would bolster and enhance collaboration, communication, and coordination between the State and county governments in times of crisis, help Maryland continue its movement toward Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911), deliver these services equitably across the state, and assure effective coordination with communications providers.

Emergency management is a year-round process, a constant loop of preparation, training, testing, and revision that strengthens community preparedness and resilience. A strong partnership among state and local agencies is vital to emergency preparedness and response.

As a Cabinet-level entity, MEMA will be in a strong position to work directly with county emergency management offices to develop scalable, flexible, and adaptable concepts and to better align key roles and responsibilities when disasters strike. This partnership will ensure the continuity of government in the face of an innumerable number of catastrophic events.

As Maryland's 9-1-1 system is a vital part of the State's emergency response and disaster preparedness network, MEMA is the proper entity to help advance the deployment of a statewide NG911 system that our residents expect and deserve, while also ensuring that the 9-1-1 Board retains its autonomy in terms of authority, enforcement, structure, training, and funding—including the management and distribution of grants.

COVID-19 has underscored the importance of a strong, well-defined, and seamless intergovernmental emergency management system. The necessary preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery must be a rigorous and coordinated intergovernmental, interagency, and interdisciplinary effort with regards to planning, training, exercising, technology, and standards.

SB 658 would strengthen and streamline collaboration in planning, response, and recovery efforts. Accordingly, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report for SB 658.