



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL:	House Bill 509
SPONSOR:	Delegate Gabriel Acevero
HEARING DATE:	February 17, 2021
COMMITTEE:	Health and Government Operations
CONTACT:	Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411
POSITION:	SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS House Bill 509**, which amends the Public Safety Article to recognize 9-1-1 Specialists as First Responders in the State of Maryland.

Recognition of 9-1-1 Specialists within the Office of Homeland Security Public Safety Communications (PSC) is an important acknowledgment of the critical role these first, first responders have in public safety. Each day, the Prince George's County Public Safety Communications 9-1-1 Center receives and processes thousands of telephone calls requesting emergency services. These emergencies may range from a life threatening illness, to a missing child, to someone trapped in a fire, to someone lost in the woods, to someone in a tense domestic violence situation. With each of these calls, the public places their trust in the person on the other end of the phone.

These telephone calls are the first contact the public has with Prince George's County's public safety response team and the first step in the life saving efforts provided by our first responders. The public trusts that each of the first responders has been trained to provide the necessary services. This includes public confidence that the technology that is being used will allow the 9-1-1 Specialist to locate them, and trusts that the 9-1-1 Specialist will provide lifesaving information while the other first responders are in route.

This legislation places the professional men and women within Public Safety Communications in the appropriate public safety role. It will have a positive impact on PSC 9-1-1/dispatch and related support staff, to include a positive impact on employee morale. There is no known negative impact with recognizing 9-1-1 Specialists as first responders.

The current definition of a 9-1-1 Specialist is "an employee of a county public safety answering point, or an employee working in a County public safety answering point,

whose duties and responsibilities include: (1) receiving and processing 9–1–1 requests for emergency services; (2) other support functions directly related to 9–1–1 requests emergency services; or (3) dispatching law enforcement officers, fire rescue services, emergency medical services, and other public safety services to the scene of an emergency.” This definition includes the majority of the staff within the Prince George’s County Public Safety Communications Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP).

The inclusion of other public safety personnel listed in the proposed legislation, not associated with the PSAP 9–1–1/dispatch function, who are already recognized as first responders (Firefighter, Paramedic, Emergency Medical Technician, Rescue Squad Members, sworn member of the Office of the State Fire Marshall, a member of a volunteer fire or rescue company, etc.), is redundant and not appropriate within this area of the Public Safety Article. An amendment removing these professions from this HB509 is recommended for full support of this legislation.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George’s County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 509 WITH AMENDMENTS** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.