

CAROLINE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

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HOUSE BILL 989

Public Safety – 9-1-1 Emergency Telephone System – Alterations
Date: March 10, 2021 To: Health & Government Operations Committee

SUPPORT

I am writing to urge a **favorable report** on House Bill 989, Public Safety – 9-1-1 Emergency Telephone System – Alterations.

My perspective on this bill is formed from a variety of hats that I wear. I am:

- An appointed Local Emergency Manager
- A Public Safety Answering Point (9-1-1 Center) Director
- An Emergency Medical Services Operational Program Highest Jurisdictional Official
- A Maryland 9-1-1 Board Member
- A member of the Next Generation 9-1-1 Commission

I share my credentials with you to assure you that this bill is impactful not only to 9-1-1 in the state, but to the entire emergency services system for the state and the residents it serves.

As a Public Safety Answering Point Director, I can tell you first hand how important understanding the impact of trauma on our 9-1-1 specialists is and how workers compensation coverage should be expanded for the *first* first responders, those who provide a calm voice to frantic callers and get the right help to the right place in the right time. Psychological training for 9-1-1 Specialists is also an important step to ensuring the employees answering the phone have the skills and knowledge to protect their own mental health in the face of some of the most horrific calls.

I can also attest to the challenges 9-1-1 Centers have with recruiting new personnel. Local government budgets often are limited in the ability to recruit new employees, and with high turnover, challenging shift schedules, and often limited ability to pay a competitive salary, our 9-1-1 Centers need help in funding recruitment efforts. The 9-1-1 Board could provide that help if this legislation passes.

As a new 9-1-1 Board member, I can say I have had the honor to work with dedicated public servants who spend several hours each month reviewing projects, weighing merit and financial requirements, and considering new standards and policies to ensure Maryland's 9-1-1 system is the best in the country. The Maryland 9-1-1 Board will benefit from new, expanded membership to be reflective of the age of technology, access, and representation that we are in now.

Additional members will bring much needed expertise and perspective to the Maryland 9-1-1 Board's operations.

As a Local Emergency Manager, my primary job is to ensure an informed and prepared public can take steps to protect themselves and others during times of emergency. Currently, when a carrier's network is offline for any reason, which will directly impact the ability of residents and visitors to make 9-1-1 calls, there is limited and inconsistent communication with local public safety answering points. This severely hampers my ability as an Emergency Manager to communicate effectively with residents regarding the emergency services system for Caroline County. Streamlining the outage notification system will create a better-informed public in times of emergency.

To summarize, House Bill 989 provides much needed support to public safety answering points, 9-1-1 specialists, and emergency services systems overall. I urge the Committee to provide a favorable recommendation for this legislation.

Sincerely,



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