



## House Bill 989

### *Public Safety - 9-1-1 Emergency Telephone System - Alterations*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Health and Government Operations  
Committee

Date: March 10, 2021

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 989. This bill will help Maryland continue its ambitious and important move toward Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911), deliver these services equitably across the state, and generally strengthens the statutory framework that governs the state's 9-1-1 system.

In 2019, the General Assembly passed landmark legislation to update state laws and the 9-1-1 financing system to provide the flexibility and resources needed for the deployment of a statewide NG911 system that our residents expect and deserve. As Maryland accelerates its move toward NG911, it is essential to adopt policies and protocols consistent with evolving technology and operational needs.

HB 989 adds necessary expertise to the Maryland 9-1-1 Board by adding additional representation, including a county finance professional, county 9-1-1 specialists, an expert from the cybersecurity industry, and a member to represent persons with disabilities. The bill also requires telecommunications providers to promptly notify 9-1-1 centers in the event of an outage, which is necessary in order to implement alternative communications methods and to provide proper public notice.

In order to address the persistent shortage of 9-1-1 specialists, the bill requires the Board to establish and host an information hub offering guidance, best practices, and strategies to boost recruitment activities for 9-1-1 centers. The bill also clarifies that county governments and the State Fire Marshall have statutory authority to enforce Kari's Law, which applies to multi-line telephone systems in office buildings, campuses, and hotels, and requires those systems to be programmed to automatically dial 9-1-1 without requiring users to enter a prefix such as "9" to reach an outside line.

By bolstering the framework and resources to guide a successful statewide transition to NG911, HB 989 will enhance public safety communications in Maryland and in our local communities

Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 989.