



**Testimony of
JAKE LESTOCK
CTIA**

In Opposition to Maryland House Bill 989

Before the Maryland House Health & Government Operations Committee

March 8, 2021

Chair, Vice-Chair, and members of the committee, on behalf of CTIA, the trade association for the wireless communications industry, I write to raise serious concerns with House Bill 989, which would create reporting mandates on wireless providers following a service outage. The industry is working diligently to maintain our networks and work with the public safety community to make sure issues like this one are appropriately addressed. HB 989 includes problematic language, creates significant concerns regarding the sharing of proprietary information, and is also unnecessary as the federal government is in the midst of considering providing outage information to states. For these reasons, we are in opposition to this bill as it is currently drafted and would recommend further study of the issue.

CTIA and its members recognize the importance wireless consumers place on their devices and networks in emergency situations, including their reliance on their wireless device to reach emergency services. This is why the wireless industry is strongly committed to minimizing network downtime and focuses on restoring service quickly when outages do occur. A consistent approach to outage reporting across states promotes efficiency and helps prevent a “patchwork quilt” of state-by-state reporting systems that unnecessarily divert resources away from the important work of restoring networks when they go down.

The wireless industry has been a committed and cooperative partner with public safety for more than twenty years as the modern wireless E-911 ecosystem has evolved. This legislation points to an issue that is the subject of ongoing discussions within the industry and public safety partnership that already exists. Our industry is actively working with the 911 Directors Committee of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government (COG). This committee brings together local government 9-1-1 Directors, state and federal partners, and communication system providers to share best practices, coordinate the support of existing 9-1-1 technology and plan the future of Next Generation 9-1-1. Here, our members are currently working with Maryland public safety answering points (PSAP) operators on issues like this. We would recommend continued work with groups like COG on issues like the ones addressed in this bill where our industry already has agreed upon language on issues like outages and existing relationships that would provide continued collaboration.



Furthermore, HB 989 as currently written includes a number of issues that would need to be thoroughly addressed; including problems with overly broad definitions and public safety concerns regarding sharing competitive and proprietary information. For example, “outage” is currently not defined but would be necessary to understanding other defined terms in the legislation. Additionally, confidentiality of outage information is imperative to our members. Providing information to the Board would subject it to public records request which would create a number of competitive concerns as one wireless carrier could be privy to its competitors’ outages. More importantly, sharing sensitive 911 information with the public could lead to significant security risks.

Additionally, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) already imposes a robust outage reporting regime on wireless providers nationwide via its Network Outage Reporting System (NORS) and Disaster Information Reporting System (DIRS). Outages of wireless network switching centers lasting more than 30 minutes are reportable to the FCC within two hours of discovery, regardless of customer impact. Further, the FCC will consider at their upcoming March meeting a draft order that would adopt a framework to provide state and federal agencies with access to outage information, which could help address the concerns raised in this legislation.

Therefore, as our industry continues to work with groups like COG on important 9-1-1 issues and the FCC is also looking to share outage information with states, we would recommend that the committee not move forward with HB 989. Given the complexity of the issue, our industry would also be open to working with a task force over the interim to ensure that this important issue is appropriately addressed.

Sincerely,

Jake Lestock
Senior Manager
State Legislative Affairs