



FRUITLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Office of Delegate Carl Anderton
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I want to express my most sincere support for HB1236. Our communications personnel (dispatchers) provide an absolutely invaluable service to police, fire and EMS personnel and our communities. Our 911 dispatchers and communications specialists save lives on a regular basis and rarely are recognized for doing so. Dispatchers receive frantic calls for help and calmly translate that into a call for service. Dispatchers provide lifesaving guidance such as CPR instructions, calming suicidal persons and even convincing armed suspects to disarm prior to police arrival. Our dispatchers are a lifeline to the public and our first responders and anyone that has ever done any of those jobs will tell you that a professional dispatcher is like having another person with you on a call.

One of the most overlooked topics in the first responder community is the contributions of our dispatchers. They are seldom paid what they are worth, and they are not generally eligible for even a comparable retirement. It needs to be acknowledged that our dispatchers experience many of the same stress reactions during tense situations. They experience the rapid pulse, increased blood pressure, anxiety, sleep pattern disruptions caused by rotating shifts. When people's lives are on the line, officers don't or can't respond to their radios, or situations end badly, our communications personnel feel all of that just as deeply as the personnel on the scene.

HB1236 goes a long way to recognizing the contributions of our communications professionals and by creating a path to eligibility and a potential for a career with a livable retirement rather than a job. I pray that HB1236 receives thorough consideration and the well-being of the citizens of the State of Maryland will be greatly improved as a result.

Sincerely,

Brian S. Swafford

Chief of Police
Fruitland Police Department