



Baltimore County Federation of Public Employees
* BCFPE Local #4883 ** AFT ** AFL-CIO *
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March 08, 2022

RE: FAVORABLE- SB751: 911 Center Specialists reclassified as First Responders.

Honorable Members of the HGO Committee,

My name is Kasia Gatchalian and I am the Vice President of The Baltimore County Federation of Public Employees who represents approximately 300 active and retired Baltimore County 911 Center Employees. I have worked as a 911 Call-Taker and a Police Dispatcher for 20 years and I have served as an Emergency Communications Assistant Supervisor in Police Dispatch for the last eight years. Over these years I have witnessed these hard-working men and women perform these highly technical jobs demonstrating acts of sacrifice and commitment to Public Safety. 911 Center Specialists work long hours taking emergency calls and managing field units. They listen to some of the most stressful situations many encounter, even when they are at times dealing with their own personal struggles. Whether it is helping give CPR instructions to the parent of a child not breathing or listening to officers needing additional units for shots fired, the 911 Specialist is there at the beginning offering immediate services. They sacrifice time away from family and friends to help keep the community safe. Recognizing 911 Center Specialists as First Responders would grant us access to various resources available to law enforcement officers, paramedics, EMT's and firefighters, including specialized mental health care. If 911 Center Specialists were appropriately classified as First Responders, we would be more equipped to handle the burnout and secondary traumatic stress that our job exposes us to. Additionally, we could gain access to training resources and funding that would enable us to better handle stressful situations. We can have the very best police and fire departments but without the 911 Center Specialist, police and fire would falter. 911 Center Specialists are the "TRUE" First Responders and this bill would correctly reclassify them as First Responders.

Because of this, I urge you to support SB751.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Vice President Kasia Gatchalian

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