

SB0749 Public Safety – 3-1-1 Systems – Nonemergency Information

Tuesday, March 8, 2022, 1:00 PM

My name is William Ferretti. I am a former 9-1-1 Director for Montgomery County. I also had the pleasure to serve on the Commission to Advance NG9-1-1 Across Maryland, first as a member of the Commission, and then after my retirement from the County, as an advisor.

As part of the North American Numbering Plan, the digits 3-1-1 were set aside for use as a number for Police Non-emergency and Government Services. Across the Nation and within Maryland, 3-1-1 has been established in various forms, as a Government Services number, as a police non-emergency number, or as both. As part of the work of the Commission to Advance NG9-1-1 Across Maryland, I participated in a workgroup of 9-1-1 professionals, 3-1-1 practitioners, 2-1-1 experts, emergency managers, and Maryland legislative representatives to examine the feasibility and benefits of creating a first in the nation 3-1-1 program that would serve as both the statewide Government Services number and the statewide Public Safety Non-emergency number.

9-1-1 is arguably the most recognized phone number in American. When a member of the public is facing a life threatening situation, this is their lifeline. Unfortunately, 9-1-1 systems can get overwhelmed with calls. Some of these calls start with the caller stating, "... It is not an emergency, but I didn't know the non-emergency number... ". This is understandable especially in our mobile and interconnected world. Residents and visitors move between jurisdictions at will and it is unreasonable that they would have programmed into their phones a list of non-emergency numbers, or have the time or resources to look them up at a moments notice. So they default to what they know, 9-1-1. Having a universally recognized non-emergency number across the state, that could route calls to each of the state's 24 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP), would alleviate this problem.

The complete 3-1-1 program as envisioned by the workgroup and presented to and approved by the Commission to Advance NG9-1-1 across Maryland is reflected in this legislation and contains some key elements:

1. Supports 3-1-1 as both the police non-emergency number with calls being routed to the appropriate PSAP, and Government Services number with calls/requests being routed to the appropriate 3-1-1 center, also referred to as a Government Services Answering Point (GSAP);
2. Requires interconnectivity and interdisciplinary training between all N11 answering points (3-1-1, 9-1-1, 2-1-1) so centers can transfer callers as needed. This shifts the burden from the resident having to figure out an appropriate number to call, to the professionals;
3. Provides all jurisdictions with a path forward, both those with current 3-1-1 operations and those without, at various levels (All-in with the state program, County maintained and supported 3-1-1 operations centers, County maintained Knowledge Base Managers);
4. Achieves economies of scale by having statewide systems and routing that will allow residents to communicate with government as they do with others in their daily lives, whether that be through calls, texts, APPs, or the Internet;
5. Mandates safeguards for 3-1-1 systems and GSAPs to provide for resiliency and survivability; and
6. Sets up a statewide 3-1-1 governance structure and standards modeled after the current state's 9-1-1 program.

This is a great opportunity for Maryland to improve the efficiency of government services for all residents and visitors. I urge you to support SB0749 with a favorable report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Ferretti', written in a cursive style.

William Ferretti