

CHERYL C. KAGAN
Legislative District 17
Montgomery County

Vice Chair
Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Joint Audit Committee
Joint Committee on Federal Relations



Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Suite 2 West
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3134 · 410-841-3134
800-492-7122 Ext. 3134
Fax 301-858-3665 · 410-841-3665
Cheryl.Kagan@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB633: Next Generation 9-1-1 Commission Omnibus Legislation

Senate Finance Committee | Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Inspired by the death of Rockville activist and District 17 resident Carl Henn when 9-1-1 failed, I have chaired the Maryland Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) Commission for the past four years. The Commission has released four annual reports in [2018](#), [2019](#), [2020](#), and [2021](#) that have been incorporated into 11 laws with bipartisan support. As a result of our efforts, Maryland is at the forefront nationally as we transition to NG911. As our colleague, Sen. Ed Reilly frequently says, “Our 9-1-1 system is one of the most important services the government provides. It can literally mean the difference between life and death.”

In our final year, the Commission has identified a number of pending issues that are incorporated into [SB633](#), including:

- **Enhancing Cybersecurity:** If a 9-1-1 Center does not comply with the 9-1-1 Board’s Cybersecurity policy, the 9-1-1 Board shall meet with the 9-1-1 Center to develop a plan and implementation timeline.
- **Authorizing Counties to Set the Local 9-1-1 Fee:** Revenues for our county 9-1-1 Centers continue to fall short. This legislation would allow counties to set the local portion of the 9-1-1 fee to cover expenses.
- **Expanding Comptroller Reporting:** The Comptroller shall report to the 9-1-1 Board on telecommunication company audits on a quarterly basis through December 31, 2024, in addition to the annual report.
- **Establishing New 9-1-1 Board Positions:** The 9-1-1 Board should create a Vice Chair position, nominated and appointed among existing members.
- **Reclassifying 9-1-1 Specialists:** 9-1-1 Specialists are the first link in the chain of safety and survival and should be classified as “First Responders.” Nine states have already reclassified these dedicated employees.
- **Requiring Implicit Bias Training:** The 9-1-1 Board would provide regular Implicit Bias training for all 9-1-1 Specialists.
- **Providing Occupational Wellness:** In order to provide access and maintain confidentiality, 9-1-1 Specialists should be able to receive mental health care without reporting to a supervisor.
- **Addressing 9-1-1 Specialist Compensation:** Inadequate pay is one of the greatest challenges in the recruitment and retention of qualified 9-1-1 Specialists. SB633 would require counties to compensate in a manner that is commensurate with the Specialists’ responsibilities, training, knowledge, and skills. *Minimum wage is unacceptable.*

- **Improving 9-1-1 Board Operations:** The 9-1-1 Board and the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) would establish a protocol for filling board vacancies efficiently.

This bill is endorsed by the NG911 Commission.

I urge a favorable report on SB633 to enhance our 24 counties' public safety systems.