



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**OVERVIEW OF NG911 LEGISLATION IN MARYLAND**

Inspired by the death of Rockville activist and District 17 resident Carl Henn when 9-1-1 failed, I have dedicated the last seven years to upgrading Maryland's 9-1-1 systems. In 2017, we created the statewide "Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) Commission" that I chair.

The Commission is comprised of a bipartisan group of legislators; 9-1-1 Center Directors; technology and telecommunications industry representatives; Cybersecurity professionals; and other stakeholders. We invested **thousands of hours** to examine the most pressing issues. To date, 11 bills have been signed into law to provide a strong framework for our 24 9-1-1 Centers.

**2018 Legislation:**

- Convening a Next Generation 9-1-1 Commission of key stakeholders to prepare for the transition to in the Next-Gen 9-1-1; and
- Allowing counties to offer 9-1-1 Specialists tax credits given to other emergency personnel.

**2019 Legislation:**

- Enhancing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) capacity to ensure that First Responders can locate those in need of help quickly and accurately;
- Updating our technology (including equipment) for receiving texts, photos, and video;
- Stopping hackers with more robust cybersecurity;
- Addressing the staffing crisis. Currently, 13% of our 9-1-1 Specialist positions statewide are vacant. This could lead to a delayed response to an emergency;
- Establishing training programs and professional certification for 9-1-1 Specialists;
- Authorizing counties to increase the local portion of the 9-1-1 fee (up to an additional \$.75) if there are budget shortfalls;
- Addressing the shortfall in revenue for our counties, which receive an average of only 37.5% of their 9-1-1 expenses from fee revenues;
- Closing the loophole in how 9-1-1 fees are assessed to reflect an evolution in how we pay for telephone service;
- Adjusting the State portion of the fee from 25¢ to 50¢ to provide much-needed funds for ongoing capital costs;
- Expanding the authority of the Emergency Number Systems Board (ENSB) to pay for recurring costs to lighten the load on counties;
- Launching a statewide education campaign on the new functions of NG911; and,
- Inserting uncodified "lockbox" language to require that, if the 9-1-1 Trust Fund is raided, it is replenished.

## 2020 Legislation:

- Requiring that the Comptroller's Office conduct audits of 9-1-1 fee collection and remittance from all telephone service providers;
- Investing in improved software to locate cell phone callers;
- Coordinating funding for a statewide public education for NG911 implementation -- including text-to-9-1-1;
- Ensuring compliance when dialing 9-1-1 without a prefix from any location, including hotels and office buildings ("Kari's Law");
- Increasing investment in our "First, First Responders" or 9-1-1 Specialists by providing direct access to health and wellness services for the cumulative impact of chronic exposure to traumatic events;
- Establishing standards for continuing education of 9-1-1 Specialists; and
- Creating a statewide Telecommunicator Emergency Response Team specially trained to assist after disasters or crises.

## 2021 Legislation:

- Making the Maryland Emergency Management Agency an independent, Cabinet-level department;
- Mandating notification of certain 9-1-1 outages to the general public, as well as 9-1-1 centers and the 9-1-1 Board;
- Establishing psychological well-being training standards for 9-1-1 Specialists;
- Modifying the membership of the 9-1-1 Board to include specified NG911 experts;
- Enforcing the use of standardized geographic data for locating callers;
- Strengthening enforcement of Kari's Law so that anyone can dial 9-1-1 without a prefix; and
- Improving 9-1-1 Specialist recruitment.

This diverse group released our fourth and final report in 2021 with 98-pages that encompassed 24 vital recommendations. Many of these are incorporated into six pieces of legislation that I'm sponsoring in our 2022 Session. Among the highlights are:

- Streamlining access to mental health services for 9-1-1 Specialists;
- Authorizing counties to set the local portion of the 9-1-1 fee to an amount that will cover eligible expenses;
- Providing Workers' Compensation for 9-1-1 Specialists with PTSD;
- Requiring timely notification of 9-1-1 outages;
- Increasing penalties for "Swatting" and cyberattacks on 9-1-1 Centers;
- Mandating Implicit Bias Training for 9-1-1 Specialists;
- Continuing Comptroller audit reporting;
- Improving 9-1-1 Board operations;
- Educating the public about Kari's Law;
- Establishing a statewide 3-1-1 system;
- Reclassifying 9-1-1 Specialists as First Responders;
- Enforcing cybersecurity standards at all 9-1-1 Centers;
- Ensuring that emergencies can be located in multi-story buildings (Z-axis); and
- Facilitating remote call-taking.

On a personal note, chairing the NG911 Commission over the past four years has truly been one of the greatest honors of my career. An overwhelming number of my legislative colleagues understood the bipartisan nature of our emergency system and the urgent need to save lives. As I often say-- **when 9-1-1 fails, people die.**