

Est. 2017



Sen. Cheryl Kagan, Chair
Steve Souder, Vice Chair

SB633/HB1105: Next Generation 9-1-1 Commission Omnibus Legislation
House Health and Government Operations Committee | March 4, 2022

I have dedicated over 50 years of my life to 9-1-1. I was there at the beginning -- when the first 9-1-1 call was made. I ran 9-1-1 Centers in four different jurisdictions of the National Capital Region: Washington, DC, Arlington County, VA, Fairfax County, VA, and Montgomery County, MD. In addition to my tenure on the 9-1-1 Board, I am Vice Chair of Maryland's Next Generation 9-1-1 Commission chaired for the past four years by Sen. Cheryl Kagan.

In our fourth and final year, we bring you this legislation to clean up and address several remaining issues within our 9-1-1 systems, including:

- **Cybersecurity Practices:** If a 9-1-1 Center does not comply with the 9-1-1 Board's cybersecurity policy and report on its compliance status, the 9-1-1 Board shall meet with the 9-1-1 Center to develop an aggressive, consensus remediation plan and implementation timeline.
- **County Authority to Set the 9-1-1 Fee:** Local 9-1-1 revenues continue to fall short of what is needed for counties to cover necessities. This legislation would allow counties to set the local portion of the 9-1-1 fee to cover **eligible** expenses.
- **Enhancing Comptroller Reporting:** The Comptroller shall provide quarterly updates through December 31, 2024, in addition to the annual report to the 9-1-1 Board.
- **9-1-1 Board Appointments:** This legislation would create a Vice Chair position on the 9-1-1 Board and require that the Board nominate and appoint someone from 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 enacted reclassification.
- **Implicit Bias Training:** The 9-1-1 Board would provide implicit bias training to new and tenured 9-1-1 Specialists. The 9-1-1 Board may impose sanctions for failure to comply.
- **Occupational Wellness:** 9-1-1 Specialists seeking mental health and/or counseling assistance would not be required to go through any chain of command in order to obtain care. Support should be confidential between the employee and the provider.
- **9-1-1 Specialist Compensation:** Inadequate compensation is one of the primary challenges in the recruitment and retention of qualified 9-1-1 Specialists. This legislation would require local jurisdictions to compensate in a manner that is commensurate with the Specialists' responsibilities, training, knowledge, and skills.
- **9-1-1 Board Member Vacancies:** The 9-1-1 Board and the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) would establish a protocol for quickly filling board vacancies.

I fully endorse this legislation, supported by the NG911 Commission, and I urge a favorable report on SB633/HB1105.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Souder