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## THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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

House Health & Gov't Operations Committee | Tuesday, March 29, 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 core functions of government. 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, rather than taking money out of their general funds that are needed for schools, roads, health care, etc.
- **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:** As amended, the 9-1-1 Board would provide Implicit Bias training for all 9-1-1 Specialists at least every 4 years.
- **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.**