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Good Afternoon, my name is Tenea Reddick. I am the 911 Director for the City of Baltimore. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit testimony for HB1105 - a bill that is deeply important to 911 centers in Maryland – to the 911 specialists that handle over 5 million 911 calls each year, and for the continuation of protecting and saving lives in Maryland.

Every minute of every day, our incredible 911 Specialists put their headsets on, log into sophisticated computer systems, and protect our communities -nonstop. They take emergency calls from residents and visitors having the worst moments of their lives: Children choking on food, suicidal teenagers, deadly car accidents, police officers in distress, firefighters trapped in buildings, and so on.. and so on.. These 911 professionals give life-saving instructions each time on these intense and critical calls. It is time that Maryland moves with the rest of the country and gives these heroes the recognition that they have earned. They are the first of the “First Responders”, and should be identified as such now and in the future.

Being a first responder means understanding the community you serve – the history, the trauma, the challenges, and experiences. In Baltimore City, we’ve taken a Trauma-Informed approach to caring for our communities, especially with our young residents. Baltimore, as a trauma informed City, ensures that every service, public servant, and policy supports understanding and healing of the community as a whole. Implicit bias training only strengthens this initiative and will provide tools to our 911 specialists to adjust automatic patterns of thinking, ultimately eliminating discriminatory behavior, and promotes a better understanding and connection to the community they protect.

Baltimore City’s 911 center was the victim of a cyber-attack in 2018 – While I can’t go into specifics, I can confidently say that cyber-attacks and the disruption of our vital computer systems at 911 places an enormous amount of stress on the 911 center and on every 911 specialist still taking emergency calls and protecting our communities. An attack can bring a center back 50 years – taking away important technology used to save lives. We never want this to happen to any center – ever. It is extremely important that all 911 centers in Maryland protect themselves at the highest level and standards.

Therefore, I recommend that HB1105 move forward to help our “First Responders” in the 911 centers continue to save lives. Thank you.

Thank you,

Tenea Reddick

Tenea Reddick, 911 Director
City of Baltimore