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Sen. Cheryl Kagan, Chair  
Steve Souder, Vice Chair

## **SB749: Public Safety - 3-1-1 Systems - Nonemergency Information**

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee | Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Chair Smith and Vice Chair Waldstreicher:

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

9-1-1 Centers process a heavy workload of people in desperate need of assistance. It's imperative that their phone lines are not tied up with nonemergent calls. Calling 9-1-1 to report a street light outage or a pothole stretches our understaffed Centers even more thin for those who are victims of a crime; experiencing a health emergency; or facing a natural disaster.

[SB749](#) would create a statewide 3-1-1 system to dramatically lighten the load at our 9-1-1 Centers while serving as a portal for government information.

This centralized program would:

- Provide helpful information to rural residents lacking broadband access or lower-income neighbors without Wi-Fi;
- Answers non-emergency questions, including:
  - COVID test/vaccine locations or other public health inquiries;
  - Animal control;
  - Trash and recycling; or
  - any other government services.
- Reduce the workload on our 9-1-1 Centers; and
- Increase career opportunities for 3-1-1 and 9-1-1 Specialists by:
  - Becoming a training opportunity for potential 9-1-1 Specialists; and
  - Giving longtime 9-1-1 Specialists a way to ramp down their career by training and mentoring 3-1-1 Specialists.

This legislation is endorsed by the NG911 Commission and the Governor's Office.

**I urge a favorable report on SB749.**

Respectfully submitted,

***Steve Souder***

*Vice Chair, NG911 Commission*