

SUPPORT

SB0057 - Criminal Law - Public Safety - Communications with Public Safety Answering Points

Written Testimony of Acting Secretary Russell J. Strickland
Maryland Department of Emergency Management
Committee: Judicial Proceedings
Hearing Date: 19 January 2022

Senate Bill 0057 is a crucial step toward protecting access to critical emergency services for Maryland residents. This bill will criminalize actions taken intentionally to disrupt the operations of Maryland's Public Safety Answering Points (also known as 9-1-1 Centers), the universal access point to emergency services for the public. The Maryland Department of Emergency Management, home to the Maryland 9-1-1 Board, recognizes the importance of this bill and we respectfully request a **favorable report**.

The criminalization of intentional actions taken to disrupt the 9-1-1 system is an important step to ensuring those who seek to interrupt the 9-1-1 and public safety dispatch system in Maryland are held responsible. The 9-1-1 system is the first step in the public safety chain, and it is imperative that the public have unfettered, uninterrupted access to this first step.

This bill also seeks to criminalize occurrences when an individual intentionally calls 9-1-1 with knowingly false information for the purposes of dispatching law enforcement response to an individual who the caller knows to be innocent, or with the specific purpose of causing bodily harm to an individual. These calls do not only place law enforcement and innocent individuals in grave danger, but they erode the public's confidence in our public safety systems. The impact of that erosion has negative impacts for all public safety and emergency services, including emergency management.

In summary, the Maryland Department of Emergency Management respectfully requests a **favorable report** on Senate Bill 0057.