



February 4, 2022

House Bill 437 (hb0467)

Written Testimony in SUPPORT

Randall J Cunningham
Harford County Department of Emergency Services
2220 Ady Rd
Forest Hill MD 21050

Good Afternoon Members of the House:

My name is Randall Cunningham, and for the past year two years, I have been the Chairman of the Cybersecurity and Technology Subcommittee for the Maryland Next Generation 9-1-1 Commission, and I am also a Technology Manager for the Harford County Department of Emergency Services.

I would like to provide some further insight into HB0437, Criminal Law – Public Safety – Communications With Public Safety Answering Points.

Over the past 20 years supporting 9-1-1 in Harford County, I have witnessed significant changes from what was previously a very simple procedure for a resident calling for help, to what is progressing to be a highly technical system, interconnected, and communicating across jurisdictions, and states.

The methods of calling 9-1-1 have expanded from only using a simple home phone, to those that now allow cell phones, automated equipment, and wearable devices to call for help. Along with the simple call for help, your phone and equipment now transmit data such as Global Positioning System (GPS) location, camera images, and other essential information to help process your call.

Because of the technical nature of the data and the methods that it can be delivered, there is also the ability for an individual to use the systems to send false data or misrepresent themselves with the intent do harm to others, all without making an actual phone call.

(1)

Many times, individuals make the calls, with the intention of forcing an emergency response by Fire, Police or Medical responders to a fake or nonexistent emergency. Other times the calls are made, with the intention of falsely reporting a crime, intending to harm innocent individuals.

House Bill 437 further defines these types of malicious acts and adds those to existing laws meant to protect not only individuals, but the PSAP itself, as well as the emergency responders. Senate Bill 57 also defines stronger penalties for those acts that are intended for or resulting in, impairing the function of a PSAP, disrupting, or forcing an emergency response, or any violation that results in bodily injuries to a person when responding to the malicious calls.

By supporting House Bill 437, you are allowing law enforcement and the judicial system to prosecute those malicious actors.