

Senator Jeff Waldstreicher Testimony - SB 677 - St

Uploaded by: Jeff Waldstreicher

Position: FAV

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The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Jeff Waldstreicher
**Senate Bill 677 – Maryland Center for School Safety – Statewide Secure Schools
Emergency Response Program – Established**

February 24, 2023

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

Every day, schools across Maryland—from Baltimore City to Garrett County—experience myriad health and safety events that require real-time communication, collaboration, and engagement across a variety of safety stakeholders. Whether it’s responding to a violent incident, an isolated medical emergency, or a mental or behavioral health emergency, faculty and first responders need the ability to communicate seamlessly. Senate Bill 677 would enable this communication by establishing the Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program.

When a medical emergency takes place on school grounds, it is imperative that accurate information about the emergency is relayed between school staff and first responders. These emergencies can happen across school campuses, at athletic events, after-hours, or during arrival and dismissal. This bill would ensure that every school, no matter their location or financial resources, has the necessary technological tools to communicate effectively with our first responders.

School safety has traditionally focused on physical hardening measures like metal detectors, but communication during emergency incidents is critical to reducing response time, delivering accurate information to 911 centers, and providing ongoing instruction to school campuses. The delivery of accurate information between 911 centers and school campuses through proximity alerting technology can allow first responders to proactively notify school campuses in a defined geographic area of real-time public safety threats. While some schools have emergency plans, many lack an easy-to-use method to directly communicate with 911 centers in the event of an emergency on a school campus.

Likewise, with “swatting” incidents on the rise, allowing schools to communicate with 911 and simultaneously check-in with all faculty and staff can help calibrate emergency response in the event of false reports, thereby preserving first responder time and resources.

National events in the past year, such as those in Uvalde, Charlottesville, and most recently in Lansing, have highlighted the challenges we face in keeping our schools and communities safe. This legislation is an important step in ensuring the safety of all students, faculty, and staff in Maryland, regardless of their location or financial resources. Maryland continues to be a leader in the school safety space, and this program is a vital part of a holistic emergency response plan. I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 677.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jeff Waldstreicher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" and "W".

Senator Jeff Waldstreicher

S.B. 677 - Karima Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Karina Holmes

Position: FAV

Hello, my name is Karima Holmes.

Over the past two decades, I have served as executive director at emergency communications centers (ECC) across the U.S., where I've been responsible for overhauling technical infrastructure and critical public safety programs. Some of the efforts I'm most proud of include leading the D.C Office of Unified Communications including oversight during National Special Security Events, State of the Union Addresses, and the 2017 and 2020 Presidential Inaugurations.

As a parent to a teenager and as someone who has worked with 9-1-1 centers throughout my career, I know firsthand how important collaboration and communication is when it comes to school safety. In fact, 9-1-1 is often the first, first responder when it comes to school safety. This is why during my time in Washington DC, we took an inclusive and unified approach to school safety that aligns well with the goals of this legislation by deploying a Panic Button App to all schools in the District. In the post Uvalde climate, Maryland Senate Bill SB 677 is a significant and necessary step in ensuring the safety and security of K-12 students, faculty, and staff across the state. This initiative calls for the creation of a Secured Schools Program (SSP) to improve the health and safety of Maryland's K-12 education system.

The SSP would include an Emergency Communication Platform, K-12 Proximity Alerts, Anti-Swatting features, and a Panic Button system to respond to emergencies. The K-12 Proximity Alerts will automatically disseminate information regarding imminent threats or important informational updates to a school campus and the Anti-Swatting feature will help right-size emergency response to false reports of school safety threats and preserve first responder time and energy. It is important to note that the technology selected for this program should be automated and independent of any existing CAD to avoid burdening 9-1-1 with additional efforts. As a former 9-1-1 Director and current board member of the 911der Women Inc. Board, I understand the importance of providing 9-1-1 with the tools they need to do their jobs effectively.

In conclusion, SB 677 is a much-needed initiative that will ensure the safety and security of Maryland's K-12 education system. I support this bill as it aligns with my passion for public safety and emergency communications.

Thank you,

Karima Holmes

SB0677-EEE_MACo_SWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Kevin Kinnally

Position: FWA



Senate Bill 677

Maryland Center for School Safety – Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program – Established

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: February 24, 2023

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 677 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill aims to strengthen school safety by implementing a statewide emergency notification system to streamline communication between school personnel, 9-1-1 centers, and public safety agencies during life-threatening emergencies.

While counties support the intent of SB 677, the technology and coordination required to implement this legislation are complex. As such, MACo urges amendments to require an interim study to evaluate and recommend how best to ensure efficient and effective responses for school-based emergencies.

The bill requires the Maryland 9-1-1 Board to collaborate with the Maryland Center for School Safety to procure and implement a panic system in every public school in the state by September 2023. The bill also requires the Maryland 9-1-1 Board to aid in operating the system and establish procedures to integrate county 9-1-1 systems with the emergency response program.

A statewide system will require interfaces with an array of equipment supported by several vendors. In addition, 9-1-1 centers, first responders, and schools will need time to train personnel on the system to make it an effective component of school safety. Furthermore, first responders must develop and adopt new protocols to successfully implement the emergency notification system.

Procuring a statewide system capable of integrating across several technological and organizational structures is challenging. Implementing an emergency system for all public schools by September 2023 is not feasible with the current competitive procurement processes.

For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 677 **WITH AMENDMENTS** to require an interim study with appropriate stakeholders to evaluate and recommend implementing a comprehensive, coordinated approach for school safety.

SB677 MCSS letter of response.pdf

Uploaded by: Kimberly Buckheit

Position: FWA

Bill:	Senate Bill 677	Date:	February 24, 2023
Title:	Maryland Center for School Safety – Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program – Established	Committee:	Education, Energy, and the Environment
Position:	Support with Amendments	Contact:	Kim Buckheit kimberly.buckheit1@maryland.gov 443-902-0622

On behalf of the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS), thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter of support with amendments to Senate Bill 677.

MCSS recognizes the intent of the bill is to have a panic system in all Maryland schools that is integrated with emergency services in a way that produces the most efficient and effective response to a school emergency. However, the effort required to implement a statewide system is complex both technologically and procedurally and the timing provided in the bill to implement such a system is not feasible.

Effective implementation of such a critical system will require a thorough assessment of existing systems, equipment, and procedures across the twenty-four local education agencies, their public safety answering points, public safety agencies, and--as written in the bill--may require considerations for some level of implementation in private schools. As such, MCSS recommends that the legislature *instead* convene a workgroup of local and State education and public safety partners to develop recommendations for how the State could ensure that every public school has the capability to facilitate direct communication between a school and public safety answering point or agency during a life-threatening emergency.

To be effective, such a system must (1) recognize the differences across each local emergency services organization and (2) integrate across the varied systems and protocols currently in place to accept, process, and dispatch emergency services. It is important to note that several local jurisdictions have *already invested* considerable resources into implementing this solution, which would necessitate additional considerations if the State attempts to implement one singular solution.

Finally and most importantly, a September 2023 implementation timeline is not feasible. In addition to the complexities mentioned above, the identification and procurement of a single system, followed by a statewide implementation, establishment of policies and procedures, and the administration of training across all 1400+ public schools and 1000+ private schools will go well beyond the three months (June to September 2023) provided in the bill. Once overarching goals are

identified, large procurements in Maryland typically take 12-18 months¹ to allow agencies to identify requirements; finalize a request for proposal; publish a request for proposal; review submitted proposals; conduct demos; ensure cybersecurity safeguards and certifications; review financials; select vendors; submit to BPW for approval; and sign the contract. Implementation, which will include many additional steps, can not begin until a contract is signed.

Although the timeline in the bill is concerning, MCSS believes it would be feasible by September 2023 to have convened a workgroup to identify the goals, objectives, and intended outcomes of a statewide integrated panic alert system. MCSS would welcome the opportunity to serve as the coordinating agency for such an important initiative.

For these reasons, MCSS respectfully requests that the committee give Senate Bill 677 a favorable with amendments report.

¹ State of Maryland Procurement Manual, 37, (December 2022), <https://procurement.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2022/12/Maryland-Procurement-Manual-v3-December-2022.pdf>.

SB 677.MCSS Central Statewide School Panic Button

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: UNF

BILL: Senate Bill 677
TITLE: Maryland Center for School Safety – Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program – Established
DATE: February 24, 2023
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes Senate Bill 677 which would mandate the creation of a new statewide “panic button” program to be accessible to all school staff and administered centrally by the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS).

MABE appreciates the intent to establish the statewide program proposed in this legislation. However, MABE believes the costs and intrusion into local policies, programs, services and school operations outweigh the benefits and merits of mandating the creation of such a program. Senate Bill 677 would establish the new statewide secure schools emergency response program to be administered by the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS). Again, MABE appreciates the stated purpose of the program to improve the safety and security of public schools in the state, but objects to the need to invest in a uniform statewide emergency notification or “panic button” system to enable school personnel to communicate directly with a public safety answering point in perceived life-threatening and emergency situations. The bill further specifies that such incidents may include an array of incidents ranging from active shooters, intruders, medical emergencies, to severe weather conditions.

In addition, MABE is concerned with the proposed timeframe, mandating the Maryland Center for School Safety to ensure that this new statewide program has been implemented in each public school in the state by October 1, 2023. Again, MABE raises concerns with the approach taken in this bill to mandate a new statewide program based on a single procurement and single point of contact in life-threatening emergency situations occurring, or perceived to be occurring, in public schools. MABE’s adopted legislative positions and policy statement on school safety and security issues strike a balance of advocating for funding and policy decisions at the state level and support for local school system efforts to develop and implement school safety programs and strategies based on local priorities and available resources.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all local boards of education in Maryland:

- ✓ **Supports** federal, State, and local government funding for local public school safety programs, facility upgrades, and the wide array of behavioral health and public safety services provided by other public and private entities, which are essential to maintaining safe and secure schools.
- ✓ **Supports** increased state funding to support the work of local school systems to ensure that state laws and regulations, including the Safe to Learn Act, are implemented with fidelity; and increased state and local funding for programs addressing gangs, drugs, human trafficking, behavioral health, and the impact of systemic violence in communities, schools, and our students’ lives.
- ✓ **Supports** local discretion to adopt programs and policies to ensure school safety and security.
- ✗ **Opposes** legislation which attempts to address student safety concerns by prescribing specific tools or approaches or imposes unfunded mandates on local boards of education.

Safety and security in public schools is extremely important to local boards of education for the protection of students and staff, as well as necessary to environments conducive to teaching and learning. MABE believes that safety in public schools is the joint responsibility of local boards of education, school administrators and staff, students, parents and guardians, law enforcement and other public safety agencies, human services agencies, and the community in general.

Following the tragic school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012, the State Board approved reforms to require evacuation, shelter in place, lockdown and other drills that all schools must conduct each year. In 2013, with MABE's support, the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) was created to facilitate coordination and collaboration between local school systems. Tragically, a mass school shooting occurred on Feb. 14, 2018 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida; and a school shooting occurred on March 20, 2018 at Great Mills High School in St. Mary's County, Maryland. These events led to broad bipartisan support for the Safe to Learn Act of 2018, which:

- Established a School Safety Subcabinet and Advisory Board and increases funding for MCSS.
- Required school systems to designate a certified school safety coordinator and to conduct annual safety evaluations of each school;
- Required local school systems to designate a mental health services coordinator, and requires local assessment teams to intervene with students and individuals who may pose a threat to school safety;
- Required all school resource officers (SROs) and school safety and security personnel to complete a specialized curriculum in school law and restorative approaches, and requires school systems to report on schools with assigned SROs and, if not, how adequate local law enforcement will be provided; and
- Provided significant funding for school facility upgrades and school safety and security programs.

The Center for School Safety has revised and expanded the mandated training for all school security staff and SROs, and the legislature consistently invests in school safety programs and facility upgrades. In 2021, the legislature considered but did not enact bills to reform or eliminate SRO programs. However, police reform laws were enacted regarding the police officers' bill of rights, police misconduct, use of force and arrest procedures, use of body-worn cameras, and training, and impact all law enforcement officers including SROs.

In addition, Maryland law mandates local board policies on criminal gang activity, background checks and employer history reviews for employees and contractors, and emergency plans and drills to prepare for violent events and natural disasters. State law also defines educators as "persons in position of authority" and criminalizes as a fourth-degree sex offense sexual activity between educators and students above the age of consent.

MABE urges the legislature to continue to invest in the high quality school safety programs described above and consider the input of local boards on legislation raising concerns about the ability to ensure safe learning environments in all schools and for all students and staff.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 677.

MDEM - SB677 - School Emergency Response Program -

Uploaded by: Anna Sierra

Position: INFO



Letter of Information - SB0677
Maryland Center for School Safety - Statewide Secure Schools
Emergency Response Program - Established

Maryland Department of Emergency Management
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Hearing Date: 24 FEB 2023

Chairman Brian J. Feldman
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 20401

Chairman Feldman,

The Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) writes today to share information on **SB0677 - Maryland Center for School Safety – Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program – Established**. The bill will require the Maryland 9-1-1 Board, an independent entity within MDEM, to collaborate with the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) to procure and implement a panic system in every public school in the state by September 2023. The bill also requires the Maryland 9-1-1 Board to aid in the operation of the system, and establish procedures to integrate county 9-1-1 systems with the procured school emergency response program.

MDEM supports the bill’s goal to have Maryland schools integrated with emergency services in a way that produces the most efficient and effective response. However, panic button integration is complex from both a technological and procedural perspective. Because Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs; also known as 9-1-1 Centers) are a local government function, each county has its own existing technology and procedures which support emergency response reflective of their given resources and organization. Procuring a statewide system capable of integrating across these technological and organizational differences would be challenging under any circumstances. SB677 requires the procurement and



implementation of a statewide system by September 2023. This is simply not feasible with the current, competitive procurement processes.

Even if procurement was feasible, the timeline is not reasonable for PSAPs or schools for implementation. A statewide system will require interfaces with a variety of equipment supported by a number of different vendors. Outside of the technological implementation, PSAPs, first responders, and schools will require time to train and exercise personnel on the system in order to make it an effective component of school safety. First responders will need to develop and adopt new protocols on how to handle such alerts.

The bill also requires any platform chosen to be certified by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security under the Support Anti-Terrorism by Fostering Effective Technologies Act. According to [SafetyAct.Gov](https://www.safetyact.gov) there are only two vendors which have modules related to panic buttons. Some counties in Maryland have already invested in direct connection technology and are not currently using either of these vendors. This may result in counties having to switch from already-implemented solutions with limited warning due to the implementation timeline.

While PSAPs are the designated 9-1-1 call taking entities in Maryland, not all PSAPs dispatch each emergency response resource in the given jurisdiction. As such, direct integration of this system to a PSAP as required by the bill may not provide the end result desired.

MDEM encourages the Committee to consider sending this bill to summer study to allow Maryland's schools, PSAPs, and field emergency responders to evaluate and make recommendations on how to best ensure efficient and effective responses for school-based emergencies. MDEM would recommend the Maryland Center for School Safety be the coordinator of such a study.

MDEM appreciates the opportunity to share this information with the Committee on SB0677. If you have any questions, please contact Anna Sierra, MDEM legislative liaison: anna.sierra1@maryland.gov.