

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*