

HB0138 Public Safety – 3-1-1 Systems – Nonemergency Information

Thursday, January 26, 2023, 3:00 PM

My name is William Ferretti. I am a former 9-1-1 Director for Montgomery County. I also had the pleasure to serve on the Commission to Advance NG9-1-1 Across Maryland, first as a member of the Commission, and then after my retirement from the County, as an advisor.

As part of the North American Numbering Plan, the digits 3-1-1 were set aside for use for Police Non-emergency and Government Services. Across the Nation and within Maryland, 3-1-1 has been established in various forms, as a Government Services number, as a Police Non-emergency Number, or as both. During and after the term of the Commission to Advance NG9-1-1 Across Maryland, I have participated in workgroups of 9-1-1 professionals, 3-1-1 practitioners, 2-1-1 experts, emergency managers, and Maryland legislative representatives to examine the feasibility and benefits of creating a first in the nation statewide 3-1-1 program that would serve as both the Government Services number and the Public Safety Non-emergency number.

9-1-1 is arguably the most recognized phone number in American. When a person is facing a life-threatening situation, this is their lifeline. Unfortunately, 9-1-1 systems can get overwhelmed with calls. Some of these calls start with the caller stating, "... It is not an emergency, but I didn't know the non-emergency number... ". This is understandable especially in our mobile and interconnected world. Residents and visitors move between jurisdictions regularly and it is unreasonable that they would have programmed into their phones a list of non-emergency numbers, or have the time or resources to look them up at a moments notice. So they default to what they know, 9-1-1. Having a universally recognized non-emergency number across the state, that could route calls to each of the state's 24 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP), could alleviate this problem.

A 3-1-1 program as envisioned by the Commission to Advance NG9-1-1 across Maryland, and documented within the final commission report in 2022, is reflected in this legislation with the following key elements:

1. Supports 3-1-1 as both the police non-emergency number with calls being routed to the appropriate PSAP, and the Government Services number with calls/requests being routed to the appropriate 3-1-1 center;
2. Requires interconnectivity and interdisciplinary training between all N11 answering points (3-1-1, 9-1-1, 2-1-1) and 9-8-8, the National and Crisis Hotline, so centers can transfer callers as needed. This thereby shifts the burden from the caller having to figure out an appropriate number to call, to the professionals to perform transfers as may be needed;
3. Provides all jurisdictions with a path forward, those with current 3-1-1 operations and those without. Allows counties to participate at various levels, all-in with the state program, continued county maintained and supported 3-1-1 operations centers, or with only county supported Knowledge Base Managers;
4. Achieves economies of scale by having statewide systems and routing that will allow residents to communicate with government as they do with others in their daily lives, whether that be through calls, texts, APPs, or the Internet;
5. Mandates safeguards for 3-1-1 systems and operations to provide for resiliency and survivability; and

6. Sets up statewide 3-1-1 governance and standards modeled after the current state's 9-1-1 program.

This is a great opportunity for Maryland to improve the efficiency of government services for all residents and visitors. I urge you to support HB0138 with a favorable report.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William Ferretti". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid.

William Ferretti