

TERRI L. HILL, M.D.

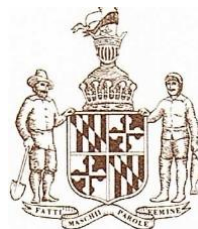
Legislative District 12A

Howard County

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Subcommittees

Government Operations and
Health Facilities
Public Health and Minority
Health Disparities



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**The Maryland House of
Delegates**

Annapolis Office

6 Bladen Street, Room 404
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

410-841-3378 | 301-858-3378
800-492-7122 Ext. 3378

Fax 410-841-3197 | 301-858-3197
Terri.Hill@house.state.md

February 28, 2024

SUPPORT

HB190 – 9-1-1 Specialists - Workers' Compensation and Attrition

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

HB190 would designate Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a presumptive job-related injury under Worker's Compensation for Public Service Access (PSAP) personnel, also known as 9-1-1 specialists. Establishing PTSD as a presumptive diagnosis ensures that 9-1-1 specialists receive appropriate interventions earlier, thus reducing the period of disability, lessening the severity of PTSD symptoms, mitigating burnout risks, improving employee retention, and lowering costs associated with personnel hiring, recruitment, and onboarding.

9-1-1 specialists constitute a category of first responders for whom the incidence of PTSD is significant and challenging to prove due to their diagnosis typically resulting from repetitive and cumulative trauma, primarily from auditory exposure in a remote location away from the incident. In contrast, police, firefighters, and Emergency Medical Technicians often attribute their diagnoses to singular, extraordinary traumatic events, readily visualized due to their shocking nature. While it is understood that the emotional-psychological impact of such singular events is linked to cumulative experiences, PTSD diagnoses surrounding a specific event are more readily understandable.

The challenging nature of the 9-1-1 specialists' position becomes apparent when considering 9-1-1 calls reported in the media, illustrating why an estimated 18-24% of 9-1-1 operators have PTSD. As the public, we catch glimpses of 9-1-1 operators handling emergencies, assessing situations, and ensuring timely responses. While our admiration is appreciated, it offers little solace when emotional-psychological symptoms emerge.

PTSD, especially without medical treatment and therapy, leads to other chronic health issues, including depression, anxiety, increased suicide risk, burnout, despondency, stress headaches, substance misuse and dependence, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and musculoskeletal disorders, which are well-documented. Common misconceptions, such as assuming professionals easily manage job-related stresses and that PTSD requires witnessing, not just hearing, traumatic events, are flawed. This has led to unfair denial of job-related compensation for those impacted. Relevant information is available in the resources provided below.

[MANAGEMENT: 911 for Emergency Dispatchers | icma.org.](#)

[The Campaign To Get 911 Dispatchers Workers' Comp For PTSD](#)

[New Colo. law expands workers' compensation for 911 dispatchers](#)

Under **HB190**, PSAP presumption for PTSD requires:

- The individual is diagnosed with PTSD by a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist.
- At the time of diagnosis, the individual has completed at least two years of cumulative service within the state as a first responder.
- The claim is filed while the individual is employed as a first responder or within 18 months immediately following separation from employment as a first responder.

Additionally, to assess the efficacy of the presumption and evaluate whether granting it to other first responders would improve overall health, job satisfaction, work performance, and retention rates for these valued, highly trained, and highly skilled professionals, the Maryland Department of Emergency Management shall submit a report to the General Assembly, comparing the rate of attrition for all 9-1-1 specialists over two periods before and the years immediately following the bill going into effect.

The granting of presumption does not restrict any other rights or claims an individual may have under this subtitle. Benefit adjustments ensure that the combined weekly total of benefits and retirement benefits doesn't surpass the weekly salary. Supported by data, it's the right thing to do for those we rely on for the safety of our families, constituents, and communities.

Supported by data, it's the right thing to do for those we want for the safety of our families, constituents, and communities.

I ask for a favorable report on **HB190**.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "D. P. ...", written in a cursive style.