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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB1069: Workers' Compensation - Occupational Disease Presumptions - First Responders
Senate Finance Committee: Tuesday, March 5, 2024, 1:00pm

“9-1-1-- What is the location of your emergency?”

Imagine answering the phone to hear a desperate parent whose child is not breathing. After you hang up, the next call is from an injured driver involved in a ten-car pile-up. Once emergency personnel reach the scene, you take a breath, only to pick up the phone and hear from a woman who has just been raped. A 9-1-1 Specialist’s daily job is demanding, harrowing, and essential to public health and safety. The courageous women and men under the headsets are certainly our **“First, First Responders.”**

The [National Emergency Numbers Association reports](#) that “there is a staffing crisis in 9-1-1. Public Safety Answering Points [9-1-1 Centers] across the nation are chronically understaffed, leading to a workforce that is continually stressed, overworked, and burned out. New hires and trainees are frequently gone before their probationary periods end.”

Research suggests that [18-24% of 9-1-1 Specialists experience PTSD](#) (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), and [23.9% exhibit symptoms of probable Major Depressive Disorder](#). The effects of trauma have likely worsened as Maryland has continued its transition to Next Generation 9-1-1, under which 9-1-1 Specialists are exposed to gruesome photos and videos as well. These audible and/or visual experiences leave 9-1-1 Specialists even more vulnerable to psychological trauma.

[Thirty-four states](#) allow First Responders to receive Workers’ Compensation benefits for work-related, mental-health injuries under various stipulations (AK, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, FL, HI, ID, LA, MA, ME, MI, MN, MO, NE, NH, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, RI, SC, TN, TX, UT, VT, VA, WA, WI, WV, WY).

The trauma associated with answering 9-1-1 calls is not hypothetical and cannot be overstated. In recent years, many of these First First Responders have died by suicide or had significant emotional breakdowns. That includes incidents here in Maryland.

As amended, [SB1069](#) would examine the rates of attrition for 9-1-1 Specialists in three different time periods. A report by the Maryland Department of Emergency Management would be due by December 31, 2028.

With respect and gratitude to our dedicated, tenacious, and courageous public servants who save lives every day, **I urge you to give SB1069 a favorable report as amended.**