

MARY BETH CAROZZA
Legislative District 38
Somerset, Wicomico,
and Worcester Counties

Education, Energy, and
the Environment Committee

Executive Nominations Committee



Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 316
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3645 • 301-858-3645
800-492-7122 Ext. 3645
Fax 410-841-3006 • 301-858-3006
MaryBeth.Carozza@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 18, 2025

The Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

SB 719 – Somerset County – Property Tax – Emergency Services Tax
Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and members of the distinguished Budget and Taxation Committee for this opportunity to present Senate Bill 719 – Somerset County – Property Tax – Emergency Services Tax.

This local, enabling legislation would allow the Board of Commissioners for Somerset County to impose an annual property tax to pay for all or part of the costs of Emergency Services in Somerset County, including fire, rescue, and emergency medical services. This annual fee would only be implemented following a public hearing with advance notice of the hearing. Several counties in Maryland already fund emergency services directly through the property tax, including Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Garrett, Howard, Kent, and Montgomery counties.

Somerset County is one of 12 Maryland counties that has a Commissioner-style government, meaning that its legislative power is limited to areas specifically authorized by the Maryland General Assembly, which explains why this local bill is before you today.

There are eight organized volunteer fire companies in Somerset County, including Ewell, Marion, Princess Anne, Tylerton, Fairmount, Crisfield, Deal Island, and Mt. Vernon. Earlier this year, the Princess Anne Volunteer Fire Company announced that it will not offer ambulance services to the community beginning July 1, 2025. The Somerset County Commissioners secured an extension of the services provided by the Princess Anne Volunteer Company until December 31, 2025 and is actively working on implementing a new Emergency Medical Services (EMS) plan for all residents.

Last year, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation (SB 807 of 2024) to allow the Somerset County Commissioners to establish an Emergency Services Advisory Council to provide the County Commissioners with recommendations regarding the operations of fire suppression, emergency medical, and hazardous materials services in the county.

SB 719 would help ensure long-term, stable funding for a reliable EMS system that meets the needs of the community – and all of our visitors coming to Somerset County for the many attractions and events held in Somerset County including the annual J. Millard Tawes Crab & Clam Bake in Crisfield to be held September 24, 2025.

The Commission to Advance and Strengthen Firefighting and Emergency Medical Services within Maryland report published on November 16, 2023 found that departments across the State are under equipped to conduct the level of recruitment required to overcome their staffing and funding needs. As you may know, all 24 counties in Maryland have seen significant decreases in recruitment and retention of firefighter and EMS personnel, which equates to a decrease in fire and EMS services in these communities, especially in the rural counties like Somerset. It is imperative that we enable our local governments with authorities to increase resources to support our firefighters and EMS personnel now and into the future.

This legislation is supported by the Somerset County Commissioners and Somerset County Emergency Services. I thank you for your kind attention and consideration, and I respectfully request a favorable and swift report on SB 719.