



House Bill 421

Public Safety – 9-1-1 Trust Fund – 9-8-8 Suicide Prevention Hotline

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Health and Government Operations
Committee

Date: February 11, 2025

From: Charlotte Fleckenstein and Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 421, which improves coordination between 9-1-1 emergency services and the 9-8-8 crisis response system while preserving the integrity of dedicated 9-1-1 funding. Allowing limited trust fund resources to support shared operational needs—such as software integration and joint training—enhances crisis response without diverting critical public safety funds.

Behavioral health emergencies often require both public safety and mental health intervention, but 9-1-1 and 9-8-8 operate largely as separate systems. Better integration between these services allows first responders to deploy the most appropriate resources, reducing strain on emergency response and improving outcomes for individuals in crisis.

The 9-1-1 Trust Fund enables counties to maintain and modernize emergency communications systems. A statewide fee on telecommunications services funds critical upgrades, operational costs, and infrastructure for Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911). These resources keep Maryland's 9-1-1 system reliable, efficient, and up to date. This bill preserves the trust fund's core purpose while enabling counties to implement more effective, technology-driven solutions.

Carl Henn's Law in 2019 bolstered Maryland's emergency communications by expanding the flexibility and resources needed to implement a statewide NG911 system. HB 421 builds on that progress, ensuring emergency response evolves to meet growing behavioral health needs while safeguarding critical resources for county 9-1-1 services.

For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 421.