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SUPPORT - HB445

CRIMINAL LAW – PUBLIC SAFETY – INTERFERENCE WITH A PUBLIC SAFETY ANSWERING POINT – PENALTIES

February 4, 2025

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

HB445 addresses the targeted, deliberate disruption and dismantling of 9-1-1 Call Centers, also known as Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs). This bill builds on recommendations from the Next Generation 9-1-1 Commission, which emphasized the urgent need to strengthen protections for critical emergency response infrastructures.

Similar legislation was introduced in 2020, 2021, and 2022. It was modified on recommendation of the 2022 Judiciary and Judicial Proceedings summer workgroup which focused on best defining of attacks, deterrence, and penalties and reintroduced, passing the House 135-0 in 2023 and 141-0 in 2024. The bill has made it to the JPR vote list but not had a vote. **HB445** is the reintroduction of that bill and is in the same posture as last year's bill.

Cyberattacks, defined by IBM as “any intentional effort to steal, expose, alter, disable, or destroy data, applications, or other assets through unauthorized access to a network, computer system or digital device”¹. PSAP cyber-attacks are particularly egregious because they jeopardize Marylanders' ability to access and receive life-saving services, put the overall safety of communities at risk. In the third quarter of 2021, there was an average of over 1,000 cyber-attacks per day.

The most common methods of attacks are:

- **Telephone Denial of Service (TDoS)** involves a large volume of malicious calls made to public service response systems with the aim of overwhelming the system.
- **Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS)** involves a large volume of malicious electronic traffic generated and directed to overwhelm a site and disrupt its service.

HB445 creates penalties for actions:

- directed with the intent of disrupting the functioning of a PSAP of a felony, punishable by up to 5 years imprisonment and/or maximal fine of \$25,000.
- resulting in the disruption or impairment of a PSAP of a felony, punishable by imprisonment for up to 10 years and/or a maximum fine of \$50,000.

To protect Maryland from cyber-attacks on critical government and emergency response infrastructures, and ensure the proper, round-the-clock operating of our emergency reporting and response systems, I ask for a favorable report on **HB445**.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Terri Hill'.

¹<https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/cyber-attack#:~:text=A%20cyberattack%20is%20any%20intentional,theft%20to%20acts%20of%20war>