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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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SB81: Protecting 9-1-1 Centers from Cyberattacks

House Judiciary Committee
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Maryland is among a diminishing number of states that have not yet enacted legislation protecting critical infrastructure from cyberattacks.

This threat is not hypothetical-- in July of 2024, a flawed security update from CrowdStrike caused what is considered to be the [largest IT outage in history](#). It took down hospitals, airports, personal computers, transit systems, and 9-1-1 centers. While this blackout was not caused by an attack, it showcased the potential impact.

Just last month, Anne Arundel County was targeted in a cyberattack that took many government services offline; caused Internet access to be limited for many state employees; and raised security concerns that forced the closure of many government buildings. The full scope of the incident is still under review.

Cybersecurity companies have blocked billions of attempts to disrupt websites of public safety and other key infrastructure, but they won't always be successful.

We rely on the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA), a federal law passed in 1986. Since then, government has been irresponsibly slow to adapt to the digital age.

As amended and passed unanimously by the Senate, [SB81](#) would explicitly make cyberattacks illegal in Maryland and criminalize any act that intends to interrupt or impair the functioning of 9-1-1 centers. For an attempted cyberattack, there would be a penalty of imprisonment not exceeding five years and/or a fine of up to \$25,000.

Thirty-one states already have laws penalizing these crimes. Similar versions of this bill passed unanimously in the Senate in 2022 and the House in 2023 and 2024.

This bill and its cross-file have each passed their chamber of origin unanimously.

I urge a favorable report on SB81 to protect the backbone of our public safety system.