



House Bill 445

Criminal Law - Interference With a Public Safety Answering Point - Penalties

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judiciary Committee

Date: February 4, 2025

From: Kevin Kinnally and Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 445, which bolsters protections against cyberattacks targeting 9-1-1 centers, a vital component of Maryland's emergency response infrastructure. By addressing these evolving threats, the bill enhances the security and stability of the 9-1-1 system, ensuring continued public safety and reliable emergency services.

Maryland's transition to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) modernizes emergency communication capabilities, enabling faster and more accurate emergency response. However, this advanced system faces significant cybersecurity threats as hackers increasingly target public safety networks. HB 445 strengthens state law by expressly prohibiting acts intended to impair or disrupt 9-1-1 center operations – deterring these malicious attacks and safeguarding Maryland's 9-1-1 system.

The bill increases penalties for individuals who intentionally disrupt 9-1-1 center operations. By elevating these offenses to felonies with penalties of up to five or ten years of imprisonment and substantial fines, the bill reflects the grave danger these actions pose to public safety.

Counties operate and fund 9-1-1 centers, which safeguard Maryland's emergency response systems. A cyberattack or disruption at a 9-1-1 center threatens lives, delays critical responses, and undermines community safety. This bill equips counties and the State with additional tools to protect residents and strengthen Maryland's 9-1-1 infrastructure.

County governments are dedicated to enhancing public safety and protecting the resources counties rely on to serve their communities. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 445.