



House Bill 444

Criminal Law – Interference With Critical Infrastructure or a Public Safety Answering Point – Penalties

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judiciary Committee

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From: Kevin Kinnally and Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 444. This bill bolsters protections against cyberattacks targeting 9-1-1 centers and other critical infrastructure, which are vital components of Maryland’s emergency response framework. By addressing these evolving threats, the bill enhances the security and stability of the 9-1-1 system and other infrastructure, ensuring continued public safety and reliable services.

Maryland’s transition to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) modernizes emergency communication capabilities, enabling faster and more accurate emergency response. Additionally, government infrastructure for fiscal management, public health, and public safety have migrated to digital infrastructure to enhance service delivery for residents. However, these advanced systems face significant cybersecurity threats as hackers increasingly target public infrastructure networks. HB 444 strengthens state law by expressly prohibiting acts intended to impair or disrupt the functionality of these programs – deterring these malicious attacks and safeguarding Maryland’s crucial infrastructure.

The bill increases penalties for individuals who intentionally disrupt certain government infrastructure that could result in serious public harm. 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 health and safety.

Counties operate and fund digital infrastructure that enables them to provide necessary services to residents statewide. A cyberattack or disruption to these programs 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 state and local 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 444.