



# MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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## **HB 590 - Income Tax - Subtraction Modification - Public Safety Employee Retirement Income**

**House Ways and Means Committee**

**February 6, 2025**

### **SUPPORT**

**Donna S. Edwards**

**President**

**Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Madame Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 590. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland's 300,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

911 specialists are essential as they are the first point of contact in moments of emergency. Providing immediate assistance, they receive calls, collect critical information, and dispatch the appropriate personnel to the scene. Their work is demanding and high-stress, often leading to severe mental health challenges and widespread staffing shortages.

HB 590 recognizes that 911 specialists play an integral role in our public safety workforce by affording them with the same tax benefits as their law enforcement and emergency response counterparts.

A 2023 study done by the National Emergency Number Association found that 82% of respondents' call centers reported being understaffed, with 75% of survey participants saying high stress and fatigue are key reasons for the shortages.<sup>1</sup> A lack of resources, benefits, and incentives create a significant shortage of well-trained and experienced 911 specialists and stifles our recruitment efforts.

HB 590 attracts people to these positions and increases retention rates. For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on HB 590.

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<sup>1</sup> "2023 Pulse of 911." NENA - The 911 Association and Carbyne State of the Industry Survey. 2023.