

**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Ways and Means Committee
HB 590
Income Tax– Subtraction Modification – Public Safety Employment Retirement Income
February 6, 2025
SUPPORT**

Good afternoon, Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee. My name is Nettie Harris, and I am a 9-1-1 specialist working for the city of Baltimore for the past 23 years. I am also a proud member of the City Union of Baltimore, AFT local 800, the union that represents a number of city employees, including our dedicated 9-1-1 call center specialists. I call on this committee to issue a favorable report to HB 590, the bill that would include the state's first responders who work in our state's different 9-1-1 call centers into the Hometown Heroes Act and allow them a bit of a tax break on their retirement incomes..

Our 9-1-1 operators handle on a daily basis police, fire, and ambulance calls. Our job is a very stressful one and it is common for us to help our residents in a wide selection of ways: Delivering babies, talking people through CPR, and staying on the phone to help our residents through crisis situations like housefiers, domestic violence instances, and anything else I'm sure you can imagine. Recently, I personally have had to try to help someone, not always successfully, survive these trying situations. We have to live through the most traumatic situations– having to help people through crisis situations that can mean life or death to them.

The state recognizes the work 9-1-1 specialists do by classifying those specialists as "first responders." Indeed that is precisely what a 9-1-1 specialist is, often the first person responding to life-threatening crises and are the first person a person experiencing serious situation reaches out to for help. Specialists have to play multiple roles when they take that emergency phone call: having to appropriately assess the problem, attempt to walk the caller through safety steps, and identify the appropriate agency to resolve the crisis. The work of the 9-1-1 specialist can be traumatizing, depending on the nature of the crisis.

We as a state recognize that other Hometown Heroes who act as first responders to very dangerous situations deserve a break on their taxes when it is time for them to retire; we are asking that we give those first responders who answer that 9-1-1 call be treated the same way. Again, we call for a favorable report to HB 590. Thank you.