



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 6, 2026

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 0009: 3-1-1 Systems - Expansion Program and Oversight Board - Establishment**

**Summary:** HB9 presents Maryland with a practical and forward-looking opportunity to: reduce strain on our emergency response system, improve access to everyday government services, and position our state as a national leader in responsible, people-centered innovation. By establishing a phased, statewide 3-1-1 system for non-emergency government services, this bill helps ensure that 9-1-1 is available for true emergencies, while giving Marylanders a faster, clearer way to get the help and information they need.

**Overview:** Maryland's 9-1-1 centers play a critical role in public safety, connecting people with police, fire, and emergency medical responders when seconds matter most. Yet today, these systems are often asked to handle far more than emergencies. A [2022 Baltimore Sun](#) investigation found that approximately 80 percent of 9-1-1 calls in Baltimore City were for non-emergency issues, calls made not out of misuse, but because callers did not know where else to turn.

This dynamic places enormous strain not only on the system, but on the professionals who staff it. Chronic understaffing, high call volumes, and the stress of constant triage contribute to burnout and turnover among 9-1-1 call-takers. A statewide 3-1-1 system directly addresses this challenge by reducing unnecessary call volume, allowing emergency dispatchers to focus on life-or-death situations, improving morale, and helping stabilize a workforce that is essential to public safety.

3-1-1 is designed to answer non-emergency questions and help people navigate government, everything from trash collection schedules and library hours to permits, public health resources, and other everyday services. When residents can reach the right service the first time, the government becomes more responsive, and emergency systems are protected from overload.

This approach also advances equity. A statewide 3-1-1 system ensures that access to information does not depend on geography or local capacity. It provides a consistent entry point for residents in rural, suburban, and urban communities alike, and offers meaningful support for individuals who face language barriers, limited broadband access, or uncertainty about how to engage with



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their government. For many Marylanders, 3-1-1 can serve as a trusted bridge, connecting them to services without fear of misusing emergency resources.

Maryland already has a strong foundation on which to build. Several jurisdictions, including Baltimore City, the first city in the nation to launch a 3-1-1 system in 1996, are leaders in this space. Today, six of the state's most populous jurisdictions offer 3-1-1 services, while many counties do not. HB9 provides a path to close that gap and makes Maryland the first state in the nation to offer a coordinated, statewide 3-1-1 system.

The bill reflects the unanimous recommendations of a bipartisan workgroup made up of legislators, including myself, county representatives, public safety leaders, and technology experts. It proposes a phased implementation, beginning with a mix of counties that already operate 3-1-1 systems and those that do not, allowing the state to evaluate performance, incorporate feedback, and scale responsibly.

HB9 also embraces the responsible use of artificial intelligence as a support tool, consistent with Maryland's broader AI principles. The proposed AI-powered 3-1-1 system would operate within a closed, controlled environment, drawing exclusively from curated, vetted, and authenticated state, county, and municipal government websites. It would not gather information from, nor learn from, the broader open web, ensuring accuracy, accountability, and public trust. This model allows residents to receive reliable answers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, while maintaining strong human oversight.

Implementation follows a thoughtful, phased approach:

- **Phase 1** establishes the Oversight Board and launches an AI chatbot in two counties with existing 3-1-1 systems and two counties without, using unified statewide data standards.
- **Phase 2** adds AI-powered voice bots with multilingual support and call-routing capabilities.
- **Phase 3** evaluates outcomes and considers statewide expansion based on demonstrated effectiveness.

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Each phase includes performance evaluation, customer satisfaction review, and a coordinated marketing and outreach campaign to ensure early adoption and public awareness.

HB9 is designed to be both fiscally prudent and readily scalable. By reducing misdirected calls, repeat inquiries, and unnecessary dispatches, a statewide 3-1-1 system improves efficiency without overpromising savings. The phased rollout, competitive contracting process, and ongoing evaluation of customer satisfaction ensure that the program remains cost-conscious, transparent, and responsive to real-world results.

**Conclusion:** House Bill 9 is ultimately about making government work better both for the people who rely on it and the professionals who deliver it. It strengthens public safety by protecting 9-1-1 capacity, supports a strained emergency communications workforce, and expands equitable access to information across the state.

Success looks like a Marylander receiving a timely, appropriate response to non-emergency issues, while a 9-1-1 call-taker is free to focus on saving a life.

With the technology now matured, a bipartisan consensus,, and a thoughtful plan for implementation and oversight in place, Maryland is well positioned to lead. In the spirit of ensuring that no one is left behind, regardless of geography, income, language, or familiarity with government. I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 9