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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Testimony SB148: Supporting Our 9-1-1 Specialists' Act

House Ways & Means Committee

Thursday, April 2, 2026, 1PM

9-1-1 Specialists are the courageous women and men under the headset who save lives and property every day. They are the FIRST First Responders when emergency assistance is needed. These jobs are **unimaginably demanding**, and the emotional toll is **significant**, according to a study on "911.gov" which [estimated a 20% rate of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder](#) (PTSD).

As Chair of the Next Generation 9-1-1 Commission for four years, I made it a point to visit every single Maryland county, where I met and heard stories from 9-1-1 Specialists. Despite the differences among our counties, there is one similarity. We all rely on our 9-1-1 Specialists. Yet there is a [14.5% average vacancy rate](#) at call centers attributed to insufficient pay, burnout, and other factors. The high-stress nature of the job makes it tough to recruit and retain skilled professionals. This tax credit would show our appreciation for the service and sacrifice of our dedicated public servants.

More recently, I served as Chair of the [9-1-1 Specialists' Recruitment & Retention Workgroup](#), which unanimously approved a report in December 2025. It included 14 recommendations and best practices from a survey of all 24 counties, showing that **retirement parity with other public safety employees would be a meaningful tool to help recruit, retain, and show gratitude to our 9-1-1 Specialists.**

Last session, the "Supporting Our 9-1-1 Specialists Act" ([SB759](#)) allowed eligible retirees to subtract up to \$15,000 from their Maryland adjusted gross income. It passed the Senate unanimously. This bill is identical and would codify a key recommendation in the Report to include 9-1-1 Specialists in a retirement benefit already available to other First Responders. The Comptroller's Office indicated that it can implement this change with existing resources.

Both the House and Senate versions of the bill are bipartisan. The bill also passed the Senate unanimously both this year and last year. (I hope you move Delegate Vogel's HB13 as well!)

I urge a favorable report on SB148.