



House Bill 509

9-1-1 Specialists - Classification as First Responders

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Health and Government Operations
Committee

Date: February 17, 2021

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 509. This bill establishes a statutory definition for the term “first responder” in the Public Safety Article and establishes the intent of the General Assembly that 9-1-1 specialists be classified as first responders in recognition of the training, knowledge, and skills that they possess and demonstrate in answering and handling requests for emergency assistance.

MACo does not raise policy objections with this goal. Rather, counties are concerned that this bill circumvents the statutory charge of the Commission to Advance Next Generation 9-1-1 Across Maryland. The topic should be formally referred to that Commission.

The Commission, established by way of a 2018 MACo Legislative Initiative, brings multiple stakeholders together to study and make recommendations for the implementation, technology, funding, personnel, training, governance, and ongoing statewide development of Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911). As a result of the Commission’s work, Maryland has passed several laws to accelerate the move toward NG911, deliver these essential services equitably across the state, and assure effective coordination with communications providers.

The Commission’s Staffing & Training Subcommittee aims to ensure that 9-1-1 specialists are equipped with the necessary training and resources to deliver the best service to those who rely on them in an emergency. In recent years, the General Assembly has passed legislation to appropriately classify and compensate 9-1-1 specialists, establish certification and recertification programs for 9-1-1 specialists based upon national standards, and expand a public safety officers tax credit to include 9-1-1 specialists.

Matters pertaining to 9-1-1 should be an element of consensus rather than conjecture. With the work of the Commission to Advance Next Generation 9-1-1 Across Maryland continuing through 2022, MACo asserts that this topic should be formally referred to that body and requests an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 509.