



Senate Bill 284

9-1-1 Specialists - Compensation and Benefits

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Finance Committee

Date: February 26, 2019

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 284 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill would provide additional tax benefits to 9-1-1 specialists by expanding the existing subtraction modification for retired law enforcement, correctional officers and fire, rescue, and emergency services personnel to include 9-1-1 specialists, creating a subtraction modification of up to \$3,000 of the qualified health insurance premium paid by a retired 9-1-1 specialist, and expanding an existing local property tax credit for 9-1-1 public safety telecommunicators.

Tax Incentives and Local Government Autonomy

Counties are eager and committed partners in promoting economic growth and creating opportunity – we prefer local autonomy in determining the best way locally. The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) opposes state-mandated reductions in local revenue sources, but welcomes tools to grant counties options and flexibility to pursue their own parallel tax incentives, or to develop others to suit their local needs.

The General Assembly routinely considers proposals to change tax structures, often seeking to stimulate economic growth, encourage beneficial activities, or attract and retain residents. These proposals often are focused exclusively on the state's tax structure, but sometimes extend to local revenues as well.

In general, MACo stands for local self-determination. Counties, led by their elected leaders who are directly accountable within the community, are in the best position to make decisions on local affairs – ranging from land use to budget priorities. MACo steadfastly guards this local autonomy, and frequently advocates against statewide solutions that mandate county compliance or otherwise override local decision-making.

Property taxes show the best collaborative way to enact targeted tax relief. The State and its local governments already work together here – where the State routinely grants a state-level tax credit, but then enables county governments to enact their own as a local option.

State proposals that involve local revenue sources can be enacted as “local option” offerings, to allow counties maximum flexibility to achieve local goals. MACo urges the Committee to primarily consider state income tax credits as the best means to incorporate local tax relief as part of a broader policy.

MACo and county governments hope the Committee finds these comments helpful. Counties stand ready to work with state policymakers to develop flexible and optional tools to create broad or targeted tax incentives, but resist state-mandated changes that preclude local input. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on SB 284.