



Senate Bill 338

Public Safety - Statewide Interoperability Radio Control Board - Established

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Health and Government Operations Committee

Date: March 20, 2014

From: Robin J. Clark

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 338. This bill would establish the Statewide Interoperability Radio Control Board in the Department of Information Technology. The Radio Control Board would manage and oversee MD FiRST, the Statewide Interoperable Public Safety Radio System. County governments across Maryland have partnered with the State in building MD FiRST and are pleased to support the creation of an inclusive and representative governance body to ensure the System's continued success.

SB 338 is identical to HB 308, which has already passed this Committee and the House.

In 2010, the State of Maryland began building an interoperable radio system for first responders to use statewide in an emergency. MD FiRST is now operational throughout central Maryland and the Eastern Shore, and state and local public safety agencies are beginning to use the system. Several county public safety agencies are already realizing the benefits of joining Maryland FiRST, including the ability to coordinate operations across jurisdictional lines. Some counties, however, have been hesitant to join MD FiRST because of its lack of governance structure.

The creation of an inclusive and representative governance structure ensures that progress on MD FiRST, including its technical completion, and user participation, will continue. The Radio Control Board as envisioned reflects the partnership between users that is integral to the viability of shared communications system and will be key to the completion of MD FiRST over the next couple of years. The Radio Control Board representative membership will be ideal for leading coordinated efforts including shared infrastructure, joint procurement of equipment, standardized procedures, prioritized maintenance, and collaborative assessment of resources. The Board will also be best suited to represent the System's users in developing agreements with federal agencies and other outside users.

MACo has previously submitted letters of support from Caroline County, Cecil County, Garrett County, Montgomery County, Queen Anne's County, the Maryland Emergency Management Association (MEMA), and the Maryland State Firemen's Association (MSFA).

For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 338 and recommends the Committee issue a **FAVORABLE** report.