



## Senate Bill 838

### *Public Safety - 9-1-1 Emergency Telephone System*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Finance Committee

Date: March 10, 2020

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 838. This bill will help Maryland continue its move toward Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911), deliver these services equitably across the state, and generally strengthens the statutory framework that governs the state's 9-1-1 system.

In 2019, the General Assembly passed landmark legislation to update state laws and the 9-1-1 financing system to provide the flexibility and resources needed for the deployment of a statewide NG911 system that our residents expect and deserve. As Maryland accelerates its move toward NG911, it is essential to adopt policies and protocols consistent with evolving technology and operational needs.

SB 838 ensures that state and local 9-1-1 revenues are allocated exclusively to support the twenty-four legislatively mandated county 9-1-1 centers, which is necessary for providing a statewide, uniform transition to NG911. Additionally, the bill adds necessary expertise to the Emergency Number Systems Board (renamed to be the Maryland 9-1-1 Board under the bill) by adding additional representation, including a county finance professional, county 9-1-1 specialists, an expert from the cybersecurity industry, and a member to represent persons with disabilities.

The bill requires the Maryland 9-1-1 Board to establish training standards for 9-1-1 centers, including continuing education standards for 9-1-1 specialists. The Board must also establish standards governing the processing of 9-1-1 requests for assistance that (1) minimize the transfer of those requests from the 9-1-1 centers that received the request to other entities and (2) avoid transfers to public safety agencies that would adversely affect a public safety response.

To provide statewide consistency and accountability, each 9-1-1 center must employ standards-based protocols for the processing of 9-1-1 requests for emergency assistance. Each center must also adopt and implement programs compliant with best practices on 9-1-1 acute/traumatic and chronic stress management. Finally, each center must verify that each of its 9-1-1 specialists is certified in each discipline related to the requests for assistance that they are responsible for receiving and processing.

By bolstering the framework and resources to guide a successful statewide transition to NG911, SB 838 will enhance public safety communications in Maryland and in our local communities

Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 838.