



Senate Bill 1053

Public Safety - 9-1-1 Public Safety Telecommunicators - Benefits

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Ways and Means Committee

Date: April 6, 2018

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 1053. This bill generally gives local governments the authority, if enacted under local law, to expand benefits for 9-1-1 public safety telecommunicators and their dependents.

SB 1053 would enable local governments to grant, by law, a property tax credit of up to \$2,500 against the local property tax for dwellings located within the taxing jurisdiction and owned by public safety telecommunicators. The bill also expands the eligibility criteria for the Edward T. and Mary A. Conroy Scholarship to include public safety communicators and their dependents, and expressly authorizes county governments to provide death and funeral benefits for 9-1-1 public safety telecommunicators.

County governments manage, operate, and fund twenty-four public safety answering points across the state. These answering points function as the vital links between 9-1-1 callers and public safety personnel. In addition to gathering essential information from callers and dispatching the appropriate first responders, public safety telecommunicators must take control of situations that are often chaotic, heart-wrenching, stressful, confusing, and frenzied.

The impacts of 9-1-1 work-related stress has made it difficult for counties to recruit and retain emergency dispatch personnel. High turnover rates and staffing shortages at dispatch centers could be further exacerbated by the increased demands and training requirements before, during, and after the transition to Next Generation 9-1-1.

SB 1053 would provide counties with another tool to incentivize potential recruits and retain current employees. This legislation properly leaves the decision for expanding employee benefits in the hands of the local governments, which are best situated to determine whether such policies are in their best interest.

Accordingly, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 1053.