



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive
cball@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov
FAX 410-313-3051

February 23, 2021

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building,
Annapolis, MD 21041

Re: Testimony **IN SUPPORT** of SB 631: Public Safety – Statewide 3–1–1 Nonemergency Telephone System

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Committee,

I commend Senator Kagan for her consistent leadership as Chair of the Commission to Advance Next Generation 911 Across Maryland and for her introduction of Senate Bill 631.

Senate Bill 631 would implement the Commission’s recommendation to establish a statewide 3-1-1 system. The system would provide Marylanders with nonemergency information about government services, resources, and information. It would also transmit questions or concerns about particular state and local agencies, programs, and services to the appropriate government personnel.

The Commission found that the COVID-19 pandemic and the 9-1-1 center staffing challenges merited consideration of ways to reduce call volume. Although some counties have 3-1-1 systems, nonemergency lines, or publicized contact directories, there is no statewide 3-1-1 service to provide a consistent level of customer service throughout Maryland. Establishing a 3-1-1 system could potentially reduce the number of calls to county 9-1-1 centers for administrative or non-emergency requests. In 2019, Howard County 9-1-1 dispatchers handled 153,204 calls for police. Dispatchers handled 39,740 in 2020 for Fire/Rescue/EMT-related needs.

As a former firefighter and EMT, I have prioritized public safety as County Executive. Our Administration has already selected a vendor to provide Next Generation Core Services to Howard County. Last year, I signed Council Bill 59-2020, which designated the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services as the county enforcement authority for the 9-1-1 direct dialing required under “Kari’s Law.” Howard County’s FY21 budget also funded two new 9-1-1 Call Center positions within the Police Department to fortify Next Generation 911 system operations.

First responders across the state continue to respond to service calls to keep our residents safe during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. They will significantly benefit from a statewide 3-1-1 system that allows them to focus on actual emergencies when a resident calls 9-1-1. Senate Bill 631 will also provide residents with a widely recognized and easy to remember number to receive consistent and coordinated public information messaging for nonemergencies.

Thank you for your continued partnership during these challenging times. I welcome your support and urge a favorable report on SB 631.

All the Best,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive