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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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SB645: 9-1-1 Board – Procurement Reform
Senate Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee
Wednesday, February 17, 2021 | 1:00 PM

I have spent the last six years working on issues related to 9-1-1. It has been one of my greatest honors to Chair the Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) Commission for the past three years. We have put an extraordinary amount of time into enacting nine new laws, pushing Maryland to the forefront of NG911 nationally.

I am very conscious of the important, time-sensitive needs related to 9-1-1. However, joined by Senators Reilly and Jackson, I believe that the current 9-1-1 procurement process is insufficient. It lacks oversight, transparency, and accountability in a way that is expected of all other agencies in our state and local government.

Over the interim, I consulted with our State Treasurer, the Department of General Services, the Department of Legislative Services, procurement experts, 9-1-1 leaders, legislators with procurement proficiency, and others in order to find a reasonable solution to improve the process without slowing down our life-saving public safety procurement.

[SB645](#) simply proposed adding one step to the current process. Rather than approving contracts internally, this legislation would have created a 60-day review process by an expert outside of the 9-1-1 community for contracts greater than \$500,000. For reference, there were just 13 contracts between November 2019 and September 2020 that would have met this criterion. If [SB658](#) passes and the 9-1-1 Board is moved with the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), this bill envisioned a procurement person within MEMA who would be responsible for analyzing the specified contracts and submit their recommendations to the 9-1-1 Board. Should that bill not prevail, the Department of General Services (DGS) indicated that they could handle this task with existing resources.

After conversations with the Maryland Association of Counties and others, I am introducing an amendment to focus on getting the appropriate data. A procurement expert in MEMA (or DGS) would be tasked with reviewing the contracts from FY20 and FY21 greater than \$500,000 and gathering details about any issues they identify. They would provide a report with problems and proposed solutions to the NG911 Commission by September 2021. Having the right information will allow us to identify specific areas that may need additional transparency and avoid slowing down Maryland's transition to NG911.

I urge a favorable with amendments report on SB645.