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THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

March 10, 2021

Delegate Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
House Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: HB 990 — Maryland Department of Emergency Management - Establishment and Transfer of Maryland 9-1-1 Board

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

I am writing to share information regarding the above referenced House Bill.

HB 990 would create the Maryland Department of Emergency Management as the successor agency to Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). The new Department would be a principal Department in the Executive Branch, and the Secretary would be appointed by the Governor, and subject to Senate confirmation. Currently the Maryland Emergency Management agency is housed under the Military Department. The Director of the agency is appointed by the Governor, but is not subject to Senate confirmation, and the agency is not a principal department of the Executive Branch.

All budgeted staff at MEMA would be transferred to the new department, and they would retain the same status and responsibilities. The overall mission and function of the agency would be unchanged.

Many other States across the country have emergency management departments that are either codified as members of the Governor's cabinet or directly report to the Governor: Alabama, California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Wyoming. The majority of the remaining states have their emergency management function report to some form of consolidated public safety department (State Police, Emergency Management, Homeland Security, Corrections, etc.).

The purpose of this legislation would be to allow the new Department of Emergency Management to serve as a third-party trusted agent, independent from any other Executive agency. Reporting directing to the Governor will allow emergency management, like every other Executive agency, to have a seat at the table as consequential decisions are made during emergencies of all kinds.

In addition, HB990 would move the 9-1-1 Board from the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Corrections to the new Maryland Department of Emergency Management. The Department would be able to perform the grant-making tasks of the board by adding a relatively small unit of employees to the Department staff. Moving this Board to the Department of Emergency Management would not have a material impact on the execution of the Department's other core functions.

It is our hope that this information will be heavily weighted as the Committee considers HB 990.

Thank you for your support of the Maryland Military Department. We would be happy to provide any additional information if required. Please feel free to reach out by e-mail catherine.a.kelly26.nfg@mail.mil or by phone 410-446-5390.

Sincerely,

Catherine A. Kelly

Catherine A. Kelly
Director, Legislative and Government Affairs

