



March 8, 2022

Senate Bill 374

**Workers' Compensation - Occupational Disease Presumptions -
9-1-1 Specialists**

Senate Finance Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 374 - Workers' Compensation - Occupational Disease Presumptions - 9-1-1 Specialists. SB 374 provides that a 9-1-1 specialist who is diagnosed by a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist with post-traumatic stress disorder is presumed to have an occupational disease that was suffered in the line of duty or course of employment and is compensable under the workers' compensation law.

Our 9-1-1 specialists have an incredibly difficult job. They talk to people who are often in crisis, hour after hour, day after day. Making sure 9-1-1 specialists have access to the mental health care and the workers' compensation they deserve is our duty not only to these courageous public servants, but to all our residents to ensure that we are able to fully staff our 9-1-1 centers.

Research suggests that between 18-24% of 9-1-1 Specialists experience PTSD when psychologically evaluated¹. The effects of trauma in their line of work is real, and impacts both their personal and professional lives. This trauma, paired with the staffing challenges seen across our region and our nation, leaves our 9-1-1 specialists feeling burnt out.

Earlier this year, Anne Arundel County began offering \$5,000 recruitment and retention bonuses for 9-1-1 specialists, to help bring on new staff while providing an incentive to keep our current team. Additionally, on Monday my administration introduced a bill to the County Council to create pathways for career growth, making it easier to retain call center staff. These local efforts paired with this state legislation will provide our 9-1-1 staff with the resources they need, and will shift the burden of proving a PTSD diagnosis is work related and paying for this critical care off of the suffering 9-1-1 specialist.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 374.

Steuart Pittman
County Executive

¹ The Journal of Emergency Dispatch. PTSD and Emergency Telecommunicators.
<https://www.iaedjournal.org/ptsd-in-911-communications-ga>