

HB0129: Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services and Public Safety Answering Points – Modifications

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My name is William Ferretti. I am a former 9-1-1 Director for Montgomery County. I also had the pleasure to serve on the Commission to Advance NG911 Across Maryland, first as a member of the Commission and then after my retirement from the County, as an advisor.

The delivery of Public Safety Services to the public is one of the most important functions of local government. Effective Public Safety responses to those in need start with the first of the first responders in Maryland's 9-1-1 centers, also known as Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP). In today's environment, a person suffering from a mental health crisis, or someone on their behalf, may reach out to a variety of resources for assistance to include public or private mental health professionals, local mental health crisis teams, 2-1-1, or the soon to be national Suicide Prevention Hotline number, 9-8-8. When an individual is in active crisis, the call is most often placed to 9-1-1 and garners a public safety response, which could be either, or both from law enforcement and Fire Rescue/EMS.

Communities all over the country are reevaluating these responses and adding different or additional resource types, such as Mobile Crisis Teams, to respond to individuals experiencing active mental health crisis. As 9-1-1 and Public Safety Services are delivered at the local level in Maryland, it is imperative to have policies in place within each 9-1-1 center for those suffering an active mental health crisis that outlines how these calls will be triaged and what resource agencies will be notified and responding. By having these policies in place as open and transparent, the community and all involved stakeholders will be able to have clear and realistic expectations for how these crisis situations are handled.

HB0129 ensures that these policies will be in place across Maryland and therefore ask for a favorable report.



William Ferretti