



Senate Bill 677

Maryland Center for School Safety – Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program – Established

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: February 24, 2023

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 677 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill aims to strengthen school safety by implementing a statewide emergency notification system to streamline communication between school personnel, 9-1-1 centers, and public safety agencies during life-threatening emergencies.

While counties support the intent of SB 677, the technology and coordination required to implement this legislation are complex. As such, MACo urges amendments to require an interim study to evaluate and recommend how best to ensure efficient and effective responses for school-based emergencies.

The bill requires the Maryland 9-1-1 Board to collaborate with the Maryland Center for School Safety to procure and implement a panic system in every public school in the state by September 2023. The bill also requires the Maryland 9-1-1 Board to aid in operating the system and establish procedures to integrate county 9-1-1 systems with the emergency response program.

A statewide system will require interfaces with an array of equipment supported by several vendors. In addition, 9-1-1 centers, first responders, and schools will need time to train personnel on the system to make it an effective component of school safety. Furthermore, first responders must develop and adopt new protocols to successfully implement the emergency notification system.

Procuring a statewide system capable of integrating across several technological and organizational structures is challenging. Implementing an emergency system for all public schools by September 2023 is not feasible with the current competitive procurement processes.

For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 677 **WITH AMENDMENTS** to require an interim study with appropriate stakeholders to evaluate and recommend implementing a comprehensive, coordinated approach for school safety.