



Letter of Information - SB0677
Maryland Center for School Safety - Statewide Secure Schools
Emergency Response Program - Established

Maryland Department of Emergency Management
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Hearing Date: 24 FEB 2023

Chairman Brian J. Feldman
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 20401

Chairman Feldman,

The Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) writes today to share information on **SB0677 - Maryland Center for School Safety – Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program – Established**. The bill will require the Maryland 9-1-1 Board, an independent entity within MDEM, to collaborate with the Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) 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 the operation of the system, and establish procedures to integrate county 9-1-1 systems with the procured school emergency response program.

MDEM supports the bill’s goal to have Maryland schools integrated with emergency services in a way that produces the most efficient and effective response. However, panic button integration is complex from both a technological and procedural perspective. Because Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs; also known as 9-1-1 Centers) are a local government function, each county has its own existing technology and procedures which support emergency response reflective of their given resources and organization. Procuring a statewide system capable of integrating across these technological and organizational differences would be challenging under any circumstances. SB677 requires the procurement and



implementation of a statewide system by September 2023. This is simply not feasible with the current, competitive procurement processes.

Even if procurement was feasible, the timeline is not reasonable for PSAPs or schools for implementation. A statewide system will require interfaces with a variety of equipment supported by a number of different vendors. Outside of the technological implementation, PSAPs, first responders, and schools will require time to train and exercise personnel on the system in order to make it an effective component of school safety. First responders will need to develop and adopt new protocols on how to handle such alerts.

The bill also requires any platform chosen to be certified by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security under the Support Anti-Terrorism by Fostering Effective Technologies Act. According to [SafetyAct.Gov](https://www.safetyact.gov) there are only two vendors which have modules related to panic buttons. Some counties in Maryland have already invested in direct connection technology and are not currently using either of these vendors. This may result in counties having to switch from already-implemented solutions with limited warning due to the implementation timeline.

While PSAPs are the designated 9-1-1 call taking entities in Maryland, not all PSAPs dispatch each emergency response resource in the given jurisdiction. As such, direct integration of this system to a PSAP as required by the bill may not provide the end result desired.

MDEM encourages the Committee to consider sending this bill to summer study to allow Maryland's schools, PSAPs, and field emergency responders to evaluate and make recommendations on how to best ensure efficient and effective responses for school-based emergencies. MDEM would recommend the Maryland Center for School Safety be the coordinator of such a study.

MDEM appreciates the opportunity to share this information with the Committee on SB0677. If you have any questions, please contact Anna Sierra, MDEM legislative liaison: anna.sierra1@maryland.gov.