



THE MARYLAND GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401-1991

9-1-1 SPECIALIST RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION WORKGROUP

November 13, 2025

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar  
The Honorable Ted Budd  
The Honorable Norma J. Torres  
The Honorable Kat Cammack  
The Honorable Christopher Van Hollen, Jr.  
The Honorable Angela D. Alsobrooks  
The Honorable Andrew P. Harris

The Honorable John A. Olszewski, Jr.  
The Honorable Sarah K. Elfreth  
The Honorable Glenn F. Ivey  
The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer  
The Honorable April McClain Delaney  
The Honorable Kweisi Mfume  
The Honorable Jamin B. (Jamie) Raskin

Dear Esteemed Leadership of the Congressional NextGen 9-1-1 Caucus and Members of Maryland's Congressional Delegation:

We are writing on behalf of the Maryland 9-1-1 Specialist Recruitment and Retention Workgroup to ask that you initiate and/or support legislation to make a change to the Internal Revenue Code (described below) that we believe will allow 9-1-1 Specialists to receive state retirement benefits that (1) are currently available to other public safety personnel and (2) would reflect the significance and personal cost of 9-1-1 Specialists' work.

Background

As you well know, 9-1-1 Specialists are a critical first line of public safety personnel, providing first response to those in need and vital communication and coordination with other first responders. Our workgroup was formed to address challenges our State faces in recruitment and retention of these critical personnel and we make this request in furtherance of those efforts.

We support and commend efforts to enact S. 725 (Enhancing First Response Act) and H.R. 637 (9-1-1 Saves Act), which recognize public safety telecommunicators for their lifesaving work by correcting their classification in the Standard Occupational Classification system. We believe another change, in the Internal Revenue Code, would similarly recognize 9-1-1 Specialists for the work they perform, and the stress and trauma they endure, by allowing them to be eligible for retirement benefits comparable to those available to other state and local public safety personnel (namely eligibility for full retirement at earlier ages and with fewer years of service).

In Maryland, the Law Enforcement Officers' Pension System (LEOPS), which is available to various police, firefighting, and emergency medical services personnel (but not 9-1-1 Specialists), allows a newly enrolling employee to receive full retirement benefits after 25 years of service or at age 50 (with 10 years of service), whichever is earlier. Maryland's Employees' Pension System, which is available to 9-1-1 Specialists, by contrast provides new enrollees full retirement benefits beginning at age 65 (with 10 years of service) or with 90 years of combined age and service years.

#### Description of the Needed Change

Maryland's State Retirement Agency has raised concerns that allowing local jurisdictions to enroll their 9-1-1 Specialists in LEOPS would create federal tax qualification issues for the system. Under Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations, the ability of LEOPS to maintain its tax qualification status as a qualified government pension plan, while offering the earlier retirement eligibility (25 years or age 50), is based on LEOPS serving only "qualified public safety employees" (see 26 CFR § 1.401(a)-1(b)(2)(v)). The current definition of "qualified public safety employee" under that IRS regulation does not encompass 9-1-1 Specialists because they do not directly provide police protection, firefighting services, or emergency medical services. The IRS regulation defines "qualified public safety employee" by reference to a provision of the Internal Revenue Code – [26 USC § 72\(t\)\(10\)\(B\)](#) ("any employee of a state or political subdivision of a state who provides police protection, firefighting services, emergency medical services, or services as a corrections officer or as a forensic security employee providing for the care, custody, and control of forensic patients for any area within the jurisdiction of such state or political subdivision").

We believe (based on research by our policy analyst staff) that adding 9-1-1 Specialists (or other similar terminology, such as "public safety telecommunicator") to 26 USC §72(t)(10)(B)(i) would allow for 9-1-1 Specialists to be provided government pension plan benefits that recognize the contributions of 9-1-1 Specialists, in the same manner that the federal tax code and regulations already allow for retirement benefits that recognize the contributions of other public safety employees. We ask that you initiate and/or support legislation to make such a change and would also encourage communication with the IRS, or other legal counsel, to confirm our view that the change would be sufficient to allow 9-1-1 Specialists to participate in qualified government pension plans, such as LEOPS, that allow for earlier full retirement for public safety employees.

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Contact Information

Thank you very much for your consideration of this request. If our workgroup can provide any further information, please reach out to us, or to our workgroup's staff lead Arnold Adja:

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Sincerely,



Senator Cheryl Kagan  
Workgroup Chair



Senator Mary Beth Carozza  
Workgroup Subcommittee Chair  
(Retirement Benefits)



Delegate Teresa E. Reilly  
Workgroup Member



Delegate Jamila J. Woods  
Workgroup Member

cc:

Governor Wes Moore

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Matthew M. Verghese

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Members of the 9-1-1 Specialist Recruitment and Retention Workgroup

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Dr. Christy Collins, 9-1-1 Board Executive Director, Maryland Department of Emergency Management

Nathanael Cooney, Human Resources Business Partner, Harford County Government, Department of Human Resources

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Charlynn F. Flaherty, Director of Public Safety Communications/Deputy Director Office of Homeland Security, Prince George's County Government

Major Tawn Gregory, Assistant Bureau Chief/Chief Information Officer, Maryland Department of State Police, Support Services Bureau

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Cecilia Warren, Director of Emergency Preparedness Policy, Maryland Department of Disabilities