



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

SB 285 Support

Finance Committee

February 6, 2018

SB 285 - Commission to Advance Next Generation 9-1-1 Across Maryland - Establishment

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The City of Takoma Park strongly supports this bill, which would facilitate much needed improvements to the 9-1-1 system by establishing a commission to research and develop a strategy for the State. Takoma Park, part of Montgomery County, borders three (3!) jurisdictions with separate 9-1-1 systems: Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and the District of Columbia. Because we are a relatively small city, when a 9-1-1 call originates from a cell phone within the city, the person or people reporting an emergency are very often routed directly to Prince George's County or D.C. – rather than Montgomery County – because of their proximity to cell towers in the bordering jurisdictions. When this occurs, the caller must 1) recognize that they have been routed to the incorrect operator, 2) know their address and relay it to the operator who then must determine their jurisdiction, and 3) wait to be rerouted by the 9-1-1 operator to Montgomery County, the appropriate jurisdiction.

When seconds matter, this process can mean a matter of life or death. If a caller does not know their address or has difficulty communicating because of the circumstances of their emergency, then seconds can easily turn into several minutes. Unfortunately, this is an all too common occurrence in Takoma Park, where calls to 9-1-1 in Takoma Park are often routed to the incorrect jurisdiction. We hear this concern from our residents frequently, with questions about why it is that applications on their cell phones designed to order a car ride or food or report a pothole can quickly determine their exact location, but a major public safety lifeline cannot. While we understand these are different platforms, we believe the line of questioning is not too far off base.

Also worth noting is that there is tremendous room for improvement in the current 9-1-1 system as it relates to accessibility for people who cannot communicate verbally. We would hope that a commission established to advance a Next Generation 9-1-1 system would also take this into consideration.

For these reasons, the City of Takoma Park strongly supports SB 285 and urges a favorable vote.