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**SENATE BILL NO. 573**

Offered January 10, 2024

Prefiled January 10, 2024

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Title 9.1 a chapter numbered 16, consisting of a section numbered 9.1-1600, relating to Virginia Public Safety Communications Infrastructure Grant Fund and Program established.*

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Patron—Obenshain

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Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Title 9.1 a chapter numbered 16, consisting of a section numbered 9.1-1600, as follows:**

**CHAPTER 16.****VIRGINIA PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT FUND AND PROGRAM.****§ 9.1-1600. Virginia Public Safety Communications Infrastructure Grant Fund and Program.**

A. There is hereby created in the state treasury a special nonreverting fund to be known as the Virginia Public Safety Communications Infrastructure Fund (the Fund). The Fund shall be established on the books of the Comptroller, shall be administered by the Department of Emergency Management (the Department), and shall be financially managed by the Virginia Resources Authority. All funds appropriated for such purpose, receipts from loans made to the Fund by local governments, and income from the investment of funds in the Fund and any gifts, donations, grants, bequests, and other funds received on its behalf shall be paid into the state treasury and credited to the Fund. Interest earned on moneys in the Fund shall remain in the Fund and be credited to it. Any moneys remaining in the Fund, including interest thereon, at the end of each fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund but shall remain in the Fund. Moneys in the Fund shall be used solely for purposes of (i) awarding grants on a competitive basis to local governments through the Virginia Public Safety Communications Infrastructure Program established pursuant to subsection B, (ii) making low-interest or zero-interest loans to local governments through the Virginia Public Safety Communications Infrastructure Program established pursuant to subsection B, or (iii) implementing and administering the Virginia Public Safety Communications Infrastructure Program established pursuant to subsection B. However, no more than 15 percent of unobligated moneys in the Fund shall be allocated for grant uses, and in no case shall grants from the Fund be used to fund the entire cost of an approved local project. Expenditures and disbursements from the Fund shall be made by the State Treasurer on warrants issued by the Comptroller upon written request signed by the State Coordinator of Emergency Management.

B. The Virginia Public Safety Communications Infrastructure Grant Program (the Program) is hereby established for the purpose, subject to appropriation, of awarding grants on a competitive basis and making low-interest or zero-interest loans from such funds as may be available from the Fund to localities for the purpose of assisting with improvement projects relating to public safety radio and communications infrastructure. The Program shall be administered by the Department. In administering the Program, the Department shall establish and publish guidelines and criteria for grant awards or loans, including guidelines and criteria governing applications to the Department and grant or loan recipients relating to improvements to public safety radio and communications infrastructure; develop funding recommendations; and provide assistance and oversight for projects funded through the Program. The Department shall prioritize projects that (i) serve law-enforcement, fire, rescue, and emergency medical services through a single operating system; (ii) provide comprehensive interoperability across multiple localities or a region; and (iii) serve areas with a high fiscal stress index score. Localities eligible for the Program upon approval from the Department shall be eligible for low-interest or zero-interest loans, partial grants, or a combination of loans and grants to help finance the costs of new or replacement public safety communications systems. However, in no case shall grants be awarded in an amount that funds the entire cost of an approved local project. The Department shall oversee each grant or loan awarded through the Program and ensure thorough reporting on each such grant.

INTRODUCED

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