

Washington County MARYLAND



EMERGENCY SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL

February 2, 2020

Mr. Johnie F. Roth, Jr, Past President
Maryland State Firemen's Association
Chairperson, MSVFRA Legislative Committee
17 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear ~~Chairperson Roth~~ Johnie,

On behalf of the Emergency Services Advisory Council of Washington County, I want to advise of our opposition to **HB0153: Public Safety - Maryland Building Performance Standards**. Please enter this letter as part of the record prior to the February 4th committee hearing.

The building code and the various requirements that impact the safety of the public are in serious jeopardy if this bill becomes law. Of course, our citizens look to government to keep them safe.

Building codes and their companion National Fire codes are appropriately revised on regular cycles that are necessary to keep pace with changes to the built environment. By not keeping pace with these changes, the general public is placed at risk. As you know, the model codes are consensus in nature and have been fairly vetted by subject matter experts from all areas responsible for safety of our citizens.

Fire Departments across our great State of Maryland rely upon the latest codes to give the best protection possible to deal with new building materials, size limitations, interior finish, safety requirements, adequate exits, and, of course, residential sprinkler requirements.

I have been an active member of the fire service in Maryland for more than fifty-five years. I realize that smoke detectors are the first line defense against fire, and that sprinklers in all occupancies are the best defense against fire deaths. Jurisdictions that have current residential sprinkler requirements, have an admirable safety record. Specifically, Prince George's County, which has had the requirement since the late 1980's. If research serves me appropriately, that county hasn't had a fire related death in a sprinklered occupancy since the legislation became law there. Their life safety record should give us great hope for the enactment of the proposed legislation. Any legislation that will ultimately delay or defer the use of approved residential fire sprinklers in homes clearly places our citizens at far greater risk than necessary. Most citizens don't know of the safety record of residential sprinklers; some only hear of items such as cost, which is reasonable for the protection, even in areas without public water. It's up to the legislators to keep our citizens safe. After all, they were elected to keep us safe.

Please have this letter entered into the public record. If you need further information, please let us know.