



Maryland Fire Chiefs Association

Representing the Maryland Emergency Services Officers with Progression While Maintaining Tradition

February 4, 2020

Delegate Kumar P. Barve
House Office Building
Room 251
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: House Bill 153: Public Safety–Maryland Building Performance Standards

Good afternoon members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee:

My name is Paul E. Sullivan, Jr. and I am the President of the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association (MFCA). The MFCA serves as the organization representing over 1600 volunteer and career Chief Officers throughout Maryland. I am writing in **OPPOSITION** of House Bill 153, Public Safety-Maryland Building Performance Standards.

Maryland has adopted model building and fire codes, and under the two separate processes, any delay in either adoption process could introduce major consequences in the coordinated enforcement of these codes. The model codes committees, mainly the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the International Code Council (ICC) have recently made major improvements in coordinating common issues cited in the building and fire codes. Some of these issues include provisions for automatic sprinkler protection in certain occupancy classifications, fire and detection alarm requirements and requirements for means of egress. Any delay in adopting the latest addition of either code could present a conflict of requirements which would be confusing and potentially delay design, approval, and construction for many projects.

The codes and standards are often revised every three years. As technology evolves, building materials and building processes improve. Most current standards contain the latest trends in building construction and fire protection. By extending this period from 18 months to 36 months, a contractor could be forced to use an older model code edition which would prohibit using the latest technology and standards. New technologies are often recognized and permitted to serve as alternate protection features in the newer editions of the model codes. Such technologies are often not permitted in the older codes since they may have not been recognized or available at the time of the adoption of the earlier code.

A major advantage to the periodic revisions to the model codes is that the revisions can take advantage of means to address new and trending issues. In addition, they also allow for the implementation of new and innovative means for fire protection which may not have been recognized by earlier standards. Code officials are forced to adopt a local best practice to regulate trending hazards. The lack of a uniform

code– based approach to regulate construction could become very confusing and frustrating to developers, designers, contractors and users. Such confusion only adds to the project costs and delays in design, construction and occupancy.

Enforcement of the building codes in Maryland is completed by local city, town or county officials. These arrangements make it more important that such officials be able to reference the most recent model code editions. This will not only allow them to coordinate with other code requirements, but also to correlate with accepted design and engineering practices that address necessary hazard mitigation and levels of required protection utilizing current trends and processes.

In closing, it is important to recognize that using outdated codes presents as a life safety concern to all Marylanders. I appreciate your time in this matter and respectfully request an UNFAVORABLE report on House Bill 153.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul E. Sullivan, Jr." The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Paul E. Sullivan, Jr.
President
Maryland Fire Chiefs Association