

George Collins

1401 Severn Street Suite C200

Baltimore, MD 21230

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Dear Charmin

I apologize for the conflict in scheduling not allowing me to be there in person today, On behalf of The International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters I am writing this letter of support for House Bill 586 Public Safety - Criminal History Records Check - Fire Departments, Rescue Squads, and Ambulance Services. This legislation to open doors of opportunity and eliminate barriers to service in public safety is a good piece of legislation.

The International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters (IABPFF) was founded in October 1970 to address the issue of recruitment and retention of African Americans in our nations fire service. This legislation will not only be helpful to African Americans, but to anyone of us who should not be judged for past indiscretions. As a 23-year veteran of Baltimore City's fire department and a 27-year veteran of the Air Force Reserves, there are many things that I am glad not to be judged on that would have prohibited my service and subsequent retirement from both these organizations.

Prior to writing this letter I called a friend and fellow fire fighter about his experience, as an applicant with background issues. In the 23 years that we have known each other this is a subject that was never discussed. In fact, he told me he was surprised that I remembered it, since it was only mentioned briefly in passing. This fire fighter was recruited by his Paramedic Instructor while he was just taking classes; When asked by his instructor, ***"Have you ever thought of being a Baltimore City fire fighter."***, he said ***"No I have a Record"***. The instructor encouraged him to apply to see what happens. This 23year veteran of the Baltimore City Fire Department, father of a high school junior and collage sophomore, whose wife works for the federal government. Heads up a model middle class family living in Baltimore City paying property, piggy back and sales taxes to the jurisdiction that gave him a chance.

In conversations with Delegate Bartlett, this is constituent driven legislation. With returning citizens having the right to vote, with spouses and other family members knowing the charter of the real people that HB 586 will effect. How many of your constituents are supportive of the opportunity for Public Safety Service for all. With the competition in the work force we don't have the luxury of eliminating people based on past mistakes. We need to be trying to be inclusive of all the best candidates.

As a retired fire fighter, community president and advocate for good legislation I request a Favorable Report on House Bill 586

George Collins

IABPFF Southeast Region, Maryland State Representative

