

Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Council – HB1389 Support

Good afternoon everyone, my name is Gordon Wallace, and I am legislative representative for the Maryland Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Council. I am also a career Chief officer in a regional Department. I'd like to thank Chairman Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and the committee for their time today.

HB1389 seeks to recognize the unique mental health challenges faced by first responders, by providing a suicide benefit for those who suffer from service connected PTSD.

This is a crucial and necessary amendment to the Public Safety Article, Section 1-202, as the inclusion of a suicide benefit for these individuals recognizes the unique and significant mental health challenges they face as a result of their selfless dedication to protecting our communities.

First responders are frequently exposed to traumatic and distressing experiences, such as witnessing devastating accidents, fires, and loss of life. These experiences can have a profound impact on their mental well-being, often leading to PTSD, anxiety, and depression. The toll of these psychological injuries can be devastating, resulting in a tragically high rate of suicide among first responders.

By providing a suicide benefit for firefighters that have suffered from PTSD, HB1389 acknowledges the sacrifices and hardships that firefighters endure as part of their service and provides the necessary support to help their families in the aftermath of a service connected suicide or disablement.

This Bill is not just about providing financial assistance; it is a statement of our commitment to the well-being of volunteer and career first responders statewide. It recognizes their mental health struggles as legitimate and deserving of support, and it sends a message that we value and honor their service and sacrifice. Ultimately, this bill is a crucial step in addressing the mental health crisis within the public service community.

It is for these reasons we ask for a favorable report from the committee.

Thank you for your time.