



March 5, 2024

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, Appropriations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
121 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee
Maryland State Senate
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairs Guzzone and Barnes,

At recent bill hearings in your committees, MACo testified in favor of legislation seeking to add to Maryland's vehicle registration surcharge, advocating for amendments to also fund the programs envisioned in one of MACo's initiative bills to offer benefits and service to our volunteer and career firefighters. With this letter, we hope to refine that request, and withdraw our suggestion that the vehicle registration surcharge be the proper method to fund these important services.

First, MACo strongly supports HB 1472 (Delegate D Jones) and SB 691 (Senator Augustine). These bills arise from the Commission to Advance and Strengthen Firefighting Service Across Maryland, a stakeholder group to which counties were glad to contribute. That group's several recommendations include educational and training opportunities for firefighters and would explore avenues to offer other benefits to those in the current and future fire service.

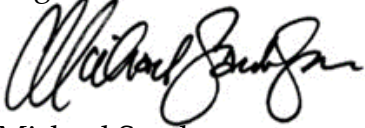
Because the bill's full potential would be difficult to reach without funding, MACo had initially seen the bills before your committees, HB 1439 (Delegate Shetty) and SB 578 (Senator Guzzone), as potentially like-minded approaches, where a modest additional charge could fund these worthy programs, in addition to the trauma response functions and other programs envisioned in the bills as introduced.

Based on stakeholder feedback in the days since the bill hearings, **MACo now recognizes the lack of consensus around such an approach, and hereby withdraws our request for such amendments to HB 1439 or SB 578.** We remain committed to the goals of advancing fire service and creating stronger benefits and incentives to strengthen that corps, but will defer to

your fiscal committees and the State's larger fiscal plan on the best means to support these worthy priorities.

We look forward to working with your committees to help find, and advance, a robust plan to support fire service across our state for this generation and the next.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Sanderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" being the most prominent part.

Michael Sanderson

Executive Director, MACo

CC: Robert Phillips, Legislative Committee Chair, Maryland State Firemen's Association
The Honorable Dana Jones, Maryland House of Delegates
The Honorable Emily Shetty, Maryland House of Delegates
The Honorable Malcolm Augustine, Maryland State Senate