

February 9, 2024

Delegate Marc Korman, Chair  
Delegate Regina T. Boyce, Vice Chair  
Environment and Transportation Committee Maryland General Assembly  
Room 251  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: HB0503 - Public Safety - Corrugated Stainless Steel Tubing for Gas Piping Systems  
Requirements and Prohibitions

Dear Delegate Korman and Delegate Boyce,

I am Celeste Flynn, widow of Lt. Nathan Flynn of the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services. Nathan was killed line of duty July 23, 2018 after he fell through the floor and became trapped in the basement. The origin and cause of the fire was determined to be CSST failure due to a lightning strike. In this scenario, the lightning struck a large tree in the home's backyard, splintering the tree. The electricity charged the tree and the ground and traveled to the buried propane tank behind the driveway. From there the electricity charged the gas delivery lines and traveled to the basement utility space where it subsequently encountered the home's CSST. The energy released from the strike was able to travel several hundred feet before it met the CSST and was still strong enough cause it to arc and fail under one of the main support beams of the home. The fire had been burning for almost an hour before Nathan entered the home with the hose line. Nate fell through the living room floor directly above the seat of the fire and became trapped in the area where the fire had started and was burning its hottest. Nate fought, valiantly and heroically, for 6 minutes to stay alive and move himself out of the area. The high heat conditions and excessive materials in the storage area prevented him from finding a path out and also for his team to locate him.

Nate was 34 years old when he died. He was a 13 year veteran of his department and a highly trained and respected member of their Special Operations Team. He was the proudest father to 3 small children; twins that were about to turn 5 and a son that turned 3 a month before he died. It has been over 5 years since we lost him and I live everyday knowing how unfair it is for Nate and for our children that he is not here to see them grow up. So many experience and memories stolen from all of us.

Three years after Nate's death, Frederick County lost BC Joshua Laird in a nearly identical fire – lightning strike to the home, energized coax lines, energy transferred to CSST, arc failure and ignition, and consumption of main structural beams. Josh Laird's mayday was also approximately one hour from the time of the lightning strike. This further cemented the hidden and unknown dangers of this product as now 2 very experienced firefighters entered homes

where these gas-fed fires had been silently burning, hiding in the interstitial floor/ceiling space, creating these deadly hazards.

Significant investigative work and research was done on the circumstances of both of these fires and the ATF has pulled together a very detailed set of findings and knowledge to share with the fire service. Of note is the inability to accurately determine presence of a basement fire in these scenarios – the thermal cameras carried by firefighters will show this as a fire on the floor of the current level vs. beneath because the fire is in that space directly beneath the floor. This can lead firefighters to proceed as they would for an above grade fire vs. a potential basement fire. These truly are hidden dangers just waiting for their next victims.

As such, the Flynn family requests full support and favorable judgement on this bill and the improved safety standards it will bring to the Maryland professional and volunteer fire service.

Respectfully,  
Celeste Flynn