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DISTRICT COURT DIVISION  
301-600-2573

CHILD SUPPORT DIVISION  
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January 26, 2024

The Honorable Luke Clippinger  
Chairperson, House Judiciary Committee  
House Office Building, Room 100  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland State's Attorney's Association, and the Frederick County State's Attorney's Office, I write in support of House Bill 321 which states it has the purpose of prohibiting a person committing designated arson and arson related offenses causing injury to a firefighter when responding to a fire or during efforts to suppress the fire.

I am the Chief of the Economic Crimes Unit. I have been a prosecutor in this office for 21 years. I have prosecuted a broad range of crimes during that time, but most of my career has involved prosecuting burglaries, felony thefts and arsons.

The tragic events of September 11, 2001, stand as the starkest and gravest example of the danger firefighters and first responders face when their emergency response is required. However, it should be acknowledged that every time you hear an ambulance or firetruck responding to a call, there is the potential for harm from the time they respond until after they arrive on scene.

Fire is a particularly destructive and unpredictable adversary and the risks associated with every incident depends on many factors which are usually unknown until initial units and/or line officers are able to assess the scene. That risk of harm to the firefighters only increases where there is a report of individuals in a burning structure, requiring them to engage in search and rescue efforts.

While the danger firefighters are exposed to at any incident are routine for them, fires initiated by arson are dangerous situations they should never have encountered, but for the malicious and willful act of another. So, when an arson is committed and a firefighter suffers injury as outlined in the bill, this prosecutor supports this law. It puts anyone on notice that if they set a fire and are convicted of the "CRIME OF ARSON", not only will they be responsible for the property damage they have committed, but they will also face potential consequences in the event of injury or harm to the heroes who respond to and engage the threat that arsonist created.

I further support the definition of "CRIME OF ARSON" proposed at Md. Code Ann., 6-112 (A), as well as the prohibition language of Md. Code Ann., 6-112 (B), the penalty provision at paragraph (C)

and the designation as consecutive to any sentence for the “CRIME OF ARSON”, as identified in paragraph (D).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide support for this bill and I urge this Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 321.

Sincerely,

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

Jason S. Shoemaker,  
Chief, Economic Crimes Unit