

## Chapter 655

**(Senate Bill 414)**

AN ACT concerning

**Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting and Emergency Medical Services Within Maryland**

FOR the purpose of establishing the Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting and Emergency Medical Services Within Maryland to study and make recommendations regarding the effectiveness and viability of certain incentives, offerings, or practices employed in other states to attract, support, and retain individuals in fire fighting and emergency medical services roles; and generally relating to the Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting and Emergency Medical Services Within Maryland.

Preamble

WHEREAS, The lives and property of Maryland residents and businesses are all protected and benefit greatly from strong and efficient fire, rescue, and emergency medical service response systems, coordinated at the county and community level across Maryland; and

WHEREAS, The social and demographic makeup of communities has largely shifted, presenting both career and volunteer fire companies great difficulty in recruiting and retaining individuals for service; and

WHEREAS, Appropriate training standards for fire and emergency medical service in either a career or volunteer capacity are important but also create a meaningful barrier to new entrants into any fire fighting or emergency medical service capacity; and

WHEREAS, A stark shortage of available recruits and on-duty firefighters and emergency medical services personnel have caused fire companies to call on volunteers who are well into ages 60 and 70 years old for primary response to fire and emergency medical calls; and

WHEREAS, Volunteer fire companies remain deeply embedded in many communities, serving as the primary fire fighting and emergency medical response across large parts of the State; and

WHEREAS, Relatively metropolitan parts of the State rely on coordinated services from both career and volunteer firefighters and emergency medical services personnel to provide needed service coverage, but face strains in finding adequate participation at both levels; and

WHEREAS, Maryland and its local governments currently offer a variety of support incentives, staff benefits, and other compensation targeted to volunteer fire company members; and

WHEREAS, The recruitment and retention of both career and volunteer firefighters ~~poses~~ and emergency medical services personnel pose an urgent and high priority concern for Marylanders' safety and security in the short term and long term; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
That:

(a) There is a Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting and Emergency Medical Services Within Maryland.

(b) The Commission consists of the following members:

(1) one representative of the Maryland Department of Labor, appointed by the Secretary of Labor;

(2) the Executive Director of the Maryland Fire Rescue Institute, or the Executive Director's designee;

(3) the Executive Director of the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems, or the Executive Director's designee;

(4) two representatives from the Maryland Municipal League, designated by the President of the Maryland Municipal League;

(5) two citizen representatives, designated by the President of the Maryland State Firemen's Association;

(6) two representatives from the Professional Firefighters of Maryland, designated by the President of the Professional Firefighters of Maryland;

(7) one representative from the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association, designated by the President of the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association;

(8) one representative from the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association, designated by the President of the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association; and

(9) the following members designated by the President of the Maryland Association of Counties:

(i) one county government representative with experience in county budgeting; and

(ii) one citizen representative.

(c) The members of the Commission shall elect a chair from among the Commission's members.

(d) The Maryland Department of Labor shall provide staff for the Commission.

(e) A member of the Commission:

(1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Commission; but

(2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

(f) The Commission shall study and make recommendations regarding:

(1) the effectiveness and viability of uniform incentives, offerings, or practices employed in other states to attract, support, and retain individuals in fire fighting and emergency medical services roles;

(2) the suitability of comparable or similar incentives, offerings, and practices as compared to the landscape of the State; and

(3) any other global issues the Commission may consider useful in enhancing and supporting career and volunteer fire fighting and emergency medical services in the State.

(g) On or before December 1, 2023, the Commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June 1, 2023. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 1 month and, at the end of June 30, 2024, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

**Approved by the Governor, May 16, 2023.**