

MARYLAND STATE FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Representing the Volunteer Fire, Rescue and Emergency Medical Services Personnel
www.msfa.org



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Chairman Davis

Madam Vice Chair Dumais

SUPPORT OF HB 408 – PUBLIC UTILITIES – GAS SERVICE REGULATOR SAFETY (FLOWER BRANCH ACT)

Good afternoon Chairman Davis, Madam Vice Chair Dumais and members of the House Economic Matters Committee.

My name is Johnie Roth, Jr. and I chair the Legislative Committee of the Maryland State Firemen's Association (MSFA), and I am writing in SUPPORT of House Bill 408 sponsored by Delegate Charkoudian and many others.

The MSFA is a statewide organization representing over 25,000 volunteer fire, rescue, emergency medical technicians, and paramedics and 363 member companies.

As a member of the fire and rescue services for the last 53 years in Montgomery County, Maryland, I was one of the many that responded to the Deadly Apartment Explosion on August 10, 2016 of the Flower Branch Apartments in Silver Spring, Maryland. That day seven residents lost their lives in a horrific explosion that ripped through the apartment complex and I had never experienced anything as bad in my life.

The National Transportation Safety Board investigation said a failed gas regulator and a disconnected vent line probably allowed gas to build up “to an explosive level” inside a basement meter room at the Flower Branch apartments, a mostly low-income complex”.

The fire and rescue service run numerous calls for the odor of natural gas in single-family homes as well as apartment complexes. It is our opinion that this incident was of an older building but that any future disasters can be averted by passing this proposed legislation.

Mr. Chairman, it is for those that died in the Flower Branch Apartment explosion that I am here today in Support of Delegate Charkoudian’s HB 408 and respectfully request a FAVORABLE REPORT.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and I’d be glad to answer any question that you may have.

**Johnie F. Roth, Jr.
MSFA Chairman
Legislative Committee**