

House Bill 0823 – Public Safety – Sprinkler Systems Enforcement

**Testimony of Josh Shapiro
Chairman of the Capital Region Fire Sprinkler Association (CRFSA)**

February 25, 2020

Good afternoon Chairman Barve, Vice Chairman Stein, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee.

My name is Josh Shapiro, Chairman for the Capital Region Fire Sprinkler Association (CRFSA), which represents fire sprinkler manufacturers, suppliers, and vendors in the Maryland, Washington D.C., and Northern Virginia area. I am testifying today in favor of House Bill 0823.

As you are aware, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation in 2012 that would require all new residential homes built within the state to be outfitted with lifesaving fire sprinklers. Three years after that legislation passed, this committee again discussed a bill that would have eliminated the state requirement for residential sprinklers. However, that bill received an unfavorable report.

House Bill 0823 is being brought to your desks today because some counties in the state are trying to ignore the law that was passed in 2012 and upheld in 2015. Unfortunately, the Office of the State Fire Marshal has their hands tied and cannot enforce the law for residential sprinklers in new one- and two-family dwellings since it rests under the umbrella of the Maryland Department of Labor.

Mr. Chairman, fire sprinklers save lives. They are first on scene before firefighters arrive. You should be very happy that above your heads are fire sprinklers. Like insurance, hopefully those fire sprinklers will never be used but if they do, they could potentially save your lives.

Five years and one month ago, in January 2015, six people were lost in what has been named the ‘Annapolis Mansion Fire.’ Had residential fire sprinklers been installed in the house, all lives could have been saved. I recently spoke two weeks ago to the Annapolis City Council with Vickie Pritchett of the National Fire Sprinkler Association and Sher Grogg, the sister of Don Pyle who lost his life that tragic day. We discussed the importance of fire sprinklers and how it helps to contain a fire while firefighters are still en route. More importantly, we discussed how fire sprinklers can buy you some time to exit the property safely.

In my capacity as Chairman for the Capital Region Fire Sprinkler Association, my chapter would like to show full support for the efforts to move enforcement to the Office of the State Fire Marshal. We cannot afford to lose more lives in residential fires and look back to today knowing that we could have done something to change it.