



Maryland Fire Chiefs Association

Representing the Maryland Emergency Services Officers with Progression While Maintaining Tradition

February 24, 2020

Hon. Delegate Dana Stein, Chair
House Environment and
Transportation Subcommittee
251 House Office Building
6 Baden Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: **SUPPORT** for House Bill 823

Dear Chairman Stein,

My name is Paul E. Sullivan, Jr. and I am the President of the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association (MFCA). The MFCA serves as the organization representing over 1600 volunteer and career Chief Officers throughout Maryland. I am writing on behalf of the members of the MFCA who are in **SUPPORT** of House Bill 823, State Fire Marshal – Sprinkler System Enforcement.

Nearly every day, firefighters arrive at a house fire, apartment or high-rise fire to find individuals trapped because there weren't working smoke alarms or fire sprinklers. In many incidents, the fire has spread from one home or building to another, causing hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars in lost property.

It's not just the occupants who are in jeopardy; the firefighters arriving to help are also in harm's way, many giving their lives annually in the line of duty. In 2012, the Maryland General Assembly recognized the importance of residential sprinklers by passing legislation requiring them in all new single family dwellings by 2015.

Today, we face an issue with the enforcement of residential sprinkler requirements. Many jurisdictions across Maryland have agencies that enforce residential sprinkler requirements. Unfortunately, there are some jurisdictions that do not have the ability to provide such enforcement or have chosen to not enforce residential sprinkler laws. I hope that you will agree that this is unacceptable. The fire service has known for decades that fire sprinklers are the best way to keep the public and firefighters safe from fire.

For decades, the State Fire Marshal's Office has been tasked with enforcing sprinkler regulations in commercial buildings. The MFCA believes that giving the State Fire Marshal's Office the overall authority to enforce residential sprinkler laws would close the gap and ensure the laws are enforced. The members of the MFCA appreciate the Committee's time in this matter and respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** vote on House Bill 823.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul E. Sullivan, Jr.".

Paul E. Sullivan, Jr.
President
Maryland Fire Chiefs Association