



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter  
In Favor of SB 1008 - Public Safety – Criminal History Records Check  
– Fire Departments, Rescue Squads, and Ambulance Services  
Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee  
on March 12, 2020**

**Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:**

**I am here today to tell you about SB 1008 – essentially a “ban the box” bill for EMT’s, paramedics and firefighters. Over the past two years, this body has voted to “ban the box” on college applications and for companies with 15 or more employees. This bill proposes that someone who applies to do this vital and dangerous work not be subjected to a criminal background check until after the first interview.**

**Currently, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Charles County and Montgomery County have policies or practices that effectively do what this legislation envisages.**

**There is nothing in this bill that prohibits an agency from running an applicant’s name through Maryland Judiciary Case Search. Or checking them on Facebook or Google prior to the first interview. This legislation gives them the chance to explain; to tell their whole story.**

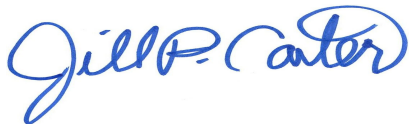
**California routinely pulls inmates out of prisons to put out wildfires, yet when they are released, they cannot get hired. Bridgeport, Connecticut has what they call a Second Chance program. Five returning citizens have been hired as first responders under that initiative and are doing well.**

**It is axiomatic by this point that employment reduces recidivism significantly. Similarly, we know that the racial nature of the war on drugs has disproportionately impacted people of color. We benefit from diversity in every aspect of public service. Why not here, as well?**

**Having had prior police contacts, or even a criminal record should not be necessarily a disqualifying condition for our first responders. It does not reflect on their physical fitness to do the job. It does not have any bearing on their ability to learn the important skills needed to protect property and save lives. It does not in any way diminish their willingness to run into a burning building while everyone else is running out. There are shortages of brave women and men willing to step up and risk everything for their fellow Marylanders. This bill gives returning citizens the chance to prove their mettle to a society that might otherwise have written them off.**

**For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 1008.**

**Very Truly Yours,**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill P. Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Jill P. Carter**