

MARYLAND STATE FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION

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



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OPPOSITION OF SB 1008 – PUBLIC SAFETY – CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORDS CHECK – FIRE DEPARTMENTS, RESCUE SQUADS, AND AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, and the members of the Committee:

My name is Kate Tomanelli and I am the Executive Director of the Maryland State Firemen's Association (MSFA), and I am writing in OPPOSITION of Senate Bill 1008.

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

Although we understand the intention of this bill, at this time, the MSFA cannot support it due to the following reasons:

- 1. This particular bill does not show the recommended amendments that were discussed when it was read in the House, those that included removing the "in-person" context for interviews, and peer review committee references.**
- 2. It also does not fully explain what would constitute an "interview" and we feel that that alone would leave the basis of this bill wide open for interpretation across the 350+ departments across the State.**

3. In addition, it is currently normal practice for our volunteer departments to conduct background checks on all of its members. That being said, because our departments are made up of volunteers, processes for onboarding a new volunteer can differ significantly depending on availability and time, and sometimes there may not be an opportunity to have a full interview with an applicant prior to providing them with an application which may or may not require them to disclose any kind of background history.

Our volunteer fire departments and rescue squads rely on background checks of our applicants to ensure that we choose the most highly qualified applicants for the dangerous, sensitive job that we do. We know the value of having people in our departments that have not only the public's trust but the trust of their fellow volunteer so the opposition is not for the background checks themselves but the order in which this bill would require our departments to acquire that information. For these reasons, the MSFA OPPOSES SB 1008 and would recommend an UNFAVORABLE REPORT.

Respectfully,
Kate Tomanelli
Executive Director, MSFA