

**Board of County
Commissioners**

**Stephen A. Wantz
President**



Carroll County Government

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Good afternoon.

I'm Stephen Wantz, President of the Carroll County Board of Commissioners and a member of the Board of Directors of the Maryland Association of Counties. I am a retired professional firefighter as well as Past President of the Carroll County Volunteer Emergency Services Association and served as a delegate in the Maryland State Firemen's Association.

Me and many of my colleagues around the state find SB 1008 challenging. When a prospective individual begins the process of becoming a member, it is the responsibility of our fire departments to ensure that the individual is vetted in the most efficient way possible. Initial interaction typically consists of an application resulting in a next step background check to ensure additional time, resource and money is warranted. We are talking about fire stations that contain huge amounts of incredibly expensive equipment and ambulances that have medications, and related equipment that are valuable ensuring they are secured appropriately. It is also vitally important to know that any individual who becomes a member and trained, will be involved with patient care and will see people when they are most vulnerable, oftentimes, in private settings. The level of responsibility and reliability is off the charts and the first step of a background step ensures the right direction moving forward.

It is also important to remember many of our volunteer departments around the state conduct candidate vetting without the benefit of a Human Resources Department or properly trained human resource individuals which begs the question, what is an interview? As a result, we rely on background checks out of the gate. It is also fiscally irresponsible to not perform a background check right away. The deeper you get in the hiring process; the more fiscal needs are incurred.

We are rapidly regulating volunteer fire, emergency medical services and rescue right out of business. While I appreciate the importance of allowing individuals to be given a chance to rehabilitate and believe in due process, our paramilitary public safety responders should be held at a much higher standard.

Conducting an initial background is the commonsense thing. I ask for an unfavorable report.

Stephen A. Wantz, President
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