

3/10/2022

Written Testimony

Support of HB-1438

To Whom it May Concern

My name is Elena Gilroy and I have been a Park Service Associate with the Maryland Park Service for over a decade now. I am writing to encourage you to give a favorable response to HB-1438.

For those of you who may not be familiar with the structure of the Maryland Park Service, Park Service Associate is the classification given to civilian Park Rangers within our agency, as the classification of "Park Ranger" had already been assigned to the job specifications of the LEO Park Rangers before we began transitioning to a civilian agency in the early 2000's. Nonetheless, our working title is Park Ranger, our job is to serve the people of the state of Maryland who recreate within our parks. As a part of this job, we are required to maintain the Red Cross certification of Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) and are frequently the first on the scene with incidents in and around our parks, often before the local fire, police, or EMS First Responders are even called. Park Service Associates are also trained in Search and Rescue, and many of us are certified for Wildland Fire Response.

I wanted to give a couple examples of situations from my time with the Maryland Park Service to help better display the emergency response work our Park Service Associates do. When I started as a Park Service Associate, I was stationed in Garrett County. Now, for anyone who is not familiar with Garrett County, much of the county is remote, and a large portion does not have any cell service, so we are fully reliant on radios, and response time for emergency calls is often slower than that in more urban areas, just because of the vast spaces that need to be covered. In Garrett County, their dispatch center recognized the important asset the Park Service Associates provided and would occasionally dispatch us to emergencies outside of the park where a timely response was essential, and the other First Responders would have a delayed response due to the distance of the station to the location. One of my colleagues responded to a drowning at a pond on private land just outside of the park. I am sure the family in that instance did not see her or her training as any less valuable than that of the other medical personnel who could have responded, they were just grateful she got there fast. I personally responded with one of my colleagues to a cardiac event outside of the park. We responded on untreated roads in the middle of a snowstorm to a very remote access point at the bottom of a mountain, where we then hiked back up the side of a mountain, in almost a foot of snow, with our entire EMS kit and AED, to provide medical attention to a hunter.

I do not share these examples for a pat on the back. We provide these services, among many others, to the citizens of the State of Maryland because it is something that we love. We have a passion for helping others, whether that help comes in the form of a map and a trail recommendation, or in the form of medical attention in what is possibly one of the most critical moments in someone's lives, because we love to serve.

We are asking for a favorable response on this bill so we can be recognized formally as the first responders that we are, so we can serve the people who live and recreate in this beautiful state in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Thank you,

Ranger Elena Gilroy

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