

**Written Testimony to the Health and Government Operations Committee
HB 1438 - State Emergency Medical Services Board – Park Services Associates –
Certification as Emergency Medical Responders
March 15, 2022**

SUPPORT

Chair and members of the committee. On behalf of the Maryland Professional Employees Council, AFT- Local 6197, representing over 5,000 professional employees for the state of Maryland, we ask for a favorable report on HB 1438-State Emergency Medical Services Board – Park Services Associates –Certification as Emergency Medical Responders.

The Department of Natural Resources currently employs 78 Park Service Associates (PSAs), commonly known as Park Rangers. They have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide immediate lifesaving interventions while awaiting additional EMS resources.

As certified Red Cross Emergency Responders, Park Rangers provide a range of emergency services such as CPR, first aid, emergency medical search and rescue, and wildland fire response. They are the frontline workers in Maryland State Parks who are usually first on the scene when incidents occur. Faced with limited staff in crowded parks at increased risk to themselves and family, they made it possible for over 21.5 million park visitors to enjoy the benefits of state parks and produced record-breaking revenues for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Despite the celebrated successes from their dedication and sacrifice, DNR and DBM repeatedly denied Park Rangers the Covid Response Pay that clearly, they were eligible and deserving to receive. It is tough to understand similar employees in the same hazardous conditions, where management deemed one eligible for the response pay yet denies the other.

Two years into the pandemic, we are reminded of the value of our state parks, recognizing the employees that make it possible, and the importance of better using our resources. This bill immediately adds trained EMRs to Maryland’s medical resources and provides Park Rangers the recognition and benefits they deserve. For these reasons, we urge you to move favorably on HB 1438.

Jerry Smith
President