



Allegany Garrett Counties Volunteer Fire Rescue Association
P.O. Box 935 Frostburg, MD 21532
agcvfra.net

Appropriations Committee
Chair Delegate Ben Barnes
March 14, 2023

Dear Committee,

The Allegany Garrett Counties Volunteer Fire Rescue Association is writing you today in full **support** of HB0788: Establishing the Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting Within Maryland to study and make recommendations regarding the effectiveness and viability of certain incentives, offerings, or practices employed in other states to attract, support, and retain individuals in fire fighting roles; and requiring the Commission to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 1, 2023.

Fire and EMS departments across Western Maryland and the nation are the lifeline and safety net of their communities providing life-saving emergency services. Like many other counties and states across the country, we have seen sharp volunteerism declines over the past several years. This decline raises many alarms for the sustainability of volunteer emergency services moving forward. Volunteers save taxpayers millions of dollars annually, and collectively, as a state, we should be looking into recruiting and retaining more volunteers to continue those savings.

As this proposed legislation continues through the committee, we offer our full support and will provide additional testimony if the occasion arises.

Sincerely,

Austin Christner, President

Jonathan Dayton, MS, NREMT, CNE, Vice President, Public Information Officer, and Legislative Committee Chairperson

The mission of the Allegany and Garrett Counties Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association is to serve, promote, advocate and represent the interests of the volunteer fire, rescue, and emergency medical services in Allegany and Garrett Counties.