



House Bill 1252

Public Safety - Volunteer Company Assistance Fund - Alterations

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Appropriations and Health and
Government Operations Committees

Date: March 30, 2023

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1252. This bill gives volunteer fire companies additional flexibility in using grants or loans issued from the Volunteer Company Assistance Fund (VCAF).

The VCAF was created to ensure adequate fire protection and rescue services across Maryland. Since the program's inception, the duties and challenges of volunteer firefighting have expanded considerably. Nationally, volunteer companies are facing a recruitment and retention crisis. This crisis comes at a time when many companies are being tasked with providing either auxiliary or primary emergency medical services (EMS), a charge these organizations were not intended to carry. While Maryland's firefighting service is currently strong and many companies have taken these new charges in stride, the road ahead presents a more challenging picture. The flexibility of HB 1252 is simple but also critical in relieving the strain felt by our volunteer fire companies. Furthermore, this flexibility is offered with no additional financial burden on the state.

HB 1252 is a commonsense way to better bolster the state's firefighting capabilities. As state leaders look at the future of firefighting, more nimble and innovative policy solutions are required to maintain the quality emergency services relied on by all Marylanders. Accordingly, MACo requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 1252.