

HB 1096 County Council of Baltimore County suppor

Uploaded by: David Marks

Position: FAV



**County Council
of
Baltimore County**

Court House
Towson, Maryland 21204

410-887-3196
Fax: 410-887-5791

February 22, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

As members of the Baltimore County Council, we are writing in support of the proposed legislation entitled *Baltimore County - Property Tax Exemption - Real Property Owned by Fire Company or Rescue Squad*. This bill would allow for real property owned by volunteer fire companies and rescue squads in Baltimore County to be exempt from paying property tax. Volunteer fire companies all across the county provide services that save the lives of countless members of our communities annually. The properties of these companies are used by life-saving first responders, as well as are locations for training and community events such as carnivals and bazaars. We all know the necessity of these fire companies and rescue squads and the impact they make on all of our communities. The noble sacrifices made by volunteer firefighters and all first responders are deserving of the support for this bill.

The locations that would be impacted by this bill are invaluable to the safety of our citizens. We strongly encourage support for the Baltimore County Property Tax Exemption for Fire Companies and Rescue Squads.

Sincerely,

Pat Young
FIRST DISTRICT

Izzy Patoka
SECOND DISTRICT

Wade Kach
THIRD DISTRICT

Julian E. Jones, Jr.
FOURTH DISTRICT

David Marks
FIFTH DISTRICT

Mike Ertel
SIXTH DISTRICT

Todd K. Crandell
SEVENTH DISTRICT

Thomas H. Bostwick
LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL
SECRETARY

Pat Young
Councilman, First District

Izzy Patoka
Councilman, Second District

Wade Kach
Councilman, Third District

Julian E. Jones, Jr.
Councilman, Fourth District

David Marks
Councilman, Fifth District

Mike Ertel
Councilman, Sixth District

Todd Crandell
Councilman, Seventh District

DM:clh

cc: All Councilmembers

BaltimoreCounty_FAV_HB1096.pdf

Uploaded by: Joshua Greenberg

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

JENNIFER AIOSA
Director of Government Affairs

AMANDA KONTZ CARR
Legislative Officer

JOSHUA M. GREENBERG
Associate Director of Government Affairs

BILL NO.: **HB 1096**

TITLE: Baltimore County - Property Tax Exemption - Real Property
Owned by Fire Company or Rescue Squad

SPONSOR: Delegate Nawrocki

COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: March 30 2023

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 1096 – Baltimore County - Property Tax Exemption - Real Property Owned by Fire Company or Rescue Squad. This legislation would provide a tax credit for real property owned by a Volunteer Fire Company or Rescue Squad located in Baltimore County.

Baltimore County provides fire and rescue services through a hybrid model of both professional and volunteer fire companies located across the county. Our volunteer fire companies provide critical services for the communities in which they reside. When the COVID-19 pandemic hindered our volunteer firefighters' ability to raise funds, County Executive Olszewski allocated \$1 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding to volunteer fire companies to keep critical services running effectively. As the County's population continues to grow our volunteer companies can use additional help.

This is why Baltimore County has worked with the sponsor of House Bill 1096, and the Baltimore County House Delegation on an amendment that specifies that only property used exclusively for fire and rescue related activities currently or in the future, may be subject to the tax relief. The County thanks the sponsor for incorporating this friendly amendment to ensure that this bill targets those properties that would benefit from this tax exemption the most.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 1096. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.

HB 1096 - BCVFA letter of support.pdf

Uploaded by: Ryan Nawrocki

Position: FAV

Susan M. Bollinger
President Baltimore County Volunteer Firefighter's Association
5502 Weywood Drive
Reisterstown, MD 21136

Delegate Ryan Nawrocki
District 7A – Baltimore County
Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street Room 322
Annapolis, MD 21401

March 29, 2023

Re: House Bill 1096

Dear Delegate Nawrocki:

I am a 40 year member of the Baltimore County Volunteer Fire System and the current president of the Baltimore County Volunteer Firefighters Association. I am writing to express my total support of House Bill 1096 which would eliminate the tax on ALL parcels owned by Baltimore County Volunteer Fire Companies that are used to support their present or future mission. I am unavailable to testify in person or on zoom due to conflicts with my regular job schedule but wanted to express the importance of this bill to the member companies of Baltimore County

Member companies currently are exempt from taxes on the parcel that houses their equipment used for emergency operations. Some companies, however, own additional parcels for future expansion or fund-raising needs. Many buy or acquire a parcel for future expansion and then begin the long process of getting approval, raising funds, planning, development etc. for future expansion. Taxing these parcels during this lengthy process creates an additional burden on these companies. Although we are extremely grateful for all the assistance that we get from both the state and local leaders we do not get or expect them to cover all of our expenses. All companies have to do some form of solicitation or fund raising in order to bridge that gap. Again, a few companies have additional parcels that they use to conduct fund raising to support their mission. Taxing these parcels only creates an additional need for fundraising to cover these expenses. Our members spend numerus hours away from their families training, responding to calls, maintaining buildings and equipment and fund raising. Any support we can give them to spend more time on the mission and less on raising funds is greatly appreciated. For these reasons I support this bill 100%. It will have great impacts on the companies with negligible impact on the budget. Thank you for your continued support of the Volunteer service and let me know if you need any additional information on this matter.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Bollinger,
President Baltimore County Volunteer Firefighters Association

HB 1096 - Del Nawrocki Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Ryan Nawrocki

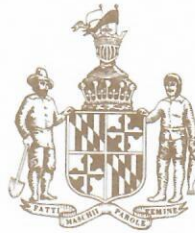
Position: FAV

RYAN NAWROCKI
Legislative District 7A
Baltimore County

Environment and Transportation
Committee

Subcommittees

Housing and Real Property
Land Use and Ethics



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 322
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3289 · 301-858-3289
800-492-7122 Ext. 3289
ryan.nawrocki@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

As a member of a local volunteer fire department, I have seen firsthand how important it is to support the safety of our communities. First responders need our full and committed support. For all the sacrifices that are made by the men and women that form all our volunteer fire departments, I aim to reduce their expenses by proposing a property tax exemption on the additional lands owned by volunteer fire and rescue companies for fire and rescue related activities. These additional properties include prospective future firehouse sites and land used for other training and fire related services.

Looking at the financials comparing a volunteer fire station's budget to a typical career house, the numbers are stark. Baltimore County gave a total financial support of \$241,758 in FY22 to Middle River Volunteer Fire & Rescue Company (MRVFR) to help cover operational expenses. This number is a rough annual average for the other 28 volunteer stations across the County. Remember, that the operational expenses in a fiscal year do not account for future development, planning, and capital expenses. Breaking even is not the goal. Volunteer fire companies seek to invest in new equipment, gear, and supplies. Middle River Volunteer Fire & Rescue Company had to spend \$80,000 recently to put a unit back into service, repairs like these aren't always projected in the annual budget. Also, many companies are hoping to invest in future firehouses, or simply just be able to maintain their fleets when needed. As a result, what they must do is fundraise endlessly. I have reviewed MRVFR's FY22 Profit & Loss sheet. It lists income from a Bull Roast, Boot Drive, Christmas Fund, Fall Fund, Spring Fund, and additional donations, and events. That is a busy fundraising calendar on top of the real work of emergency responses. This amount of work often necessitates hiring a full-time development director for a typical non-profit. These firefighters shouldn't be fundraising to pay for property taxes on lands used for fire and rescue services. They should be fundraising for new equipment, gear, or improvements to the station. These are the types of line items on the expense sheet that ultimately benefit the citizens of Baltimore County - the tools necessary to engage in life-saving activities.

It is instructive to compare volunteer firehouse and the career fire departments numbers in Baltimore County's FY23 proposed budget. The FY23 budget totals \$121.5 million for the fire department. Out of that \$121.5 million, only \$10.7 million, is contributed to volunteer fire companies. So, to calculate on average, the 25 career stations will cost approximately \$4.4 million each in FY23 to operate and are fully funded by the County. That is a far cry from the \$241,000 given to help cover Middle River's FY22 operating expenses. So then, a volunteer station on average costs the taxpayers 5% of a typical career station in Baltimore County - \$241,000 vs. \$4.4 million. To acknowledge the cost-savings that the 29 volunteer companies give to Baltimore County as a whole, this legislation is critical.

This is in no way meant to reflect negatively on the valuable and necessary work of our career fire service, but rather to highlight the significant financial value volunteer departments offer Baltimore County. This tax credit will incentivize these much-needed volunteer organizations to continue their good work that provides an invaluable service to the community and a significant cost-savings to Baltimore County. By not allowing this credit, we are only disincentivizing volunteer companies to make future improvements upon their facilities or properly maintain properties that often provide valuable and much needed open space to many communities. Supporters of this legislation include the Baltimore County Volunteer Firefighters Association, the Baltimore County Executive, the entire Baltimore County Council, and the Baltimore County House Delegation. Even the leadership of volunteer fire companies that would not be receiving this credit because it does not apply to their properties, such as White Marsh Volunteer Fire Company, Long Green Volunteer Fire Company, and Liberty Road Volunteer Fire Company, are united in support of this legislation. I urge a favorable report of this bill to greatly benefit these volunteer fire companies that will benefit significantly from this cost-savings in their annual budgets. Allow them to focus on saving lives rather than additional fundraising demands.

Raja Nawrothi

HB1096 - Lutherville VFC letter of support.pdf

Uploaded by: Ryan Nawrocki

Position: FAV

LUTHERVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY, INC.

P.O. Box 232 • Lutherville, Maryland 21094-0232 • 1609 Belona Avenue • Lutherville, Maryland 21093
Emergency: 911 • Office 410-252-3134 • Firehouse: 410-887-7778
Web Site: www.lvfc.com

March 10, 2023

Ryan Nawrocki

Legislative District 7A

Maryland House of Delegates

6 Bladen Street, Room 322

Annapolis, MD 21401

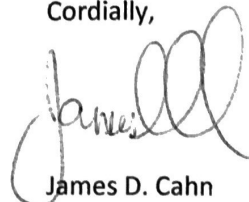
Delegate Nawrocki:

On behalf of the Officers and Members of the Lutherville Volunteer Fire Company, I wish to thank you for your leadership in sponsoring HB1096, that provides a direct benefit to Volunteer Fire Companies, like ours, that are paying property taxes on properties that we purchased both for expansion of our existing firehouse as well as parking required to support our training center in the firehouse. Even though the expansion is complete, we still pay property tax on those properties.

I have found it interesting and unfair that 100% volunteer fire companies, who provide emergency services to the citizens of Baltimore County at no cost to them, pay taxes for the right to provide these free services. I'm appreciative that someone has recognized this issue and is proposing legislation to discontinue this practice. Since 2017, the Lutherville Volunteer Fire Company has paid \$18,000 in property tax and an additional \$20,000 in total for water and sewer taxes.

Delegate Nawrocki, thanks again for your leadership and ongoing support of emergency services.

Cordially,



James D. Cahn

President

ORGANIZED 1909

HB1096 - Providence VFC letter of support.pdf

Uploaded by: Ryan Nawrocki

Position: FAV

Robert Hornbacher
1214 Brook Meadow Drive
Towson, Md 21286
rkhornbacher@gmail.com

February 23, 2023

MR Ryan Nawrocki
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street Room 322
Annapolis, MD 21401

Mr. Ryan Nawrocki

I am writing you in support of HB1096 Baltimore County Fire Department Property Tax. As a tax payer and a 28-year Baltimore County Volunteer Firefighter, I feel this is common sense legislation. The savings provided to the Volunteer fire companies of Baltimore County far outweighs the value from the collected taxes.

The volunteer fire companies of Baltimore County provide an incredible benefit to Baltimore County and the State of Maryland both in services provided and tax dollars saved. Many of the fire companies of Baltimore County have plans for future expansion due to county growth, increased call volume, and the simple need to accommodate modern firefighting, rescue and EMS service. Currently volunteer fire companies and rescue squads are recognized as non-profit 501(c)3 organizations, and as a result they receive the benefit of not paying sales tax or paying property tax on the land where their buildings are located; however, the additional properties that volunteer fire companies and rescue squads own still are charged tax. It is important that we extend this proposed additional credit to these organizations as a whole to be exempt from paying property tax on all additional properties; rather than only offering the credit to the land where the buildings currently reside.

The monies saved to Baltimore County volunteer fire companies will ultimately be invested back into fire company operations, whether it goes towards new apparatus, EMS equipment, or the expansion / reconstruction of a fire station it is an investment into the Baltimore County Volunteer Fire Service and the citizens of Baltimore County and those they visit and travel through.

This proposed legislation is simply common sense and ultimately benefits everyone. I thank you for the legislation introduction and I encourage all of the Baltimore County delegation to support it.

Sincerely

Robert Kevin Hornbacher

Robert K. Hornbacher

HB1096 Delegation Letter to Budget & Taxaction .pd

Uploaded by: Ryan Nawrocki

Position: FAV

ERIC EBERSOLE
CHAIR

CARL JACKSON
VICE CHAIR

CHERYL E. PASTEUR
SECRETARY



ADRIENNE A. JONES
SPEAKER

NICK ALLEN
HARRY BHANDARI
JON S. CARDIN, ESQ.
CATHERINE M. FORBES
ROBIN L. GRAMMER, JR.
MICHELE GUYTON
BOB LONG
NINO MANGIONE
ALETHEIA MCCASKILL
RIC METZGAR
RYAN NAWROCKI
N. SCOTT PHILLIPS
SHEILA RUTH
DANA M. STEIN
KATHY SZELIGA
JENNIFER WHITE

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401
BALTIMORE COUNTY HOUSE DELEGATION

March 6th, 2023

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary
Chair
House Ways and Means Committee
Room 131
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB1096 – Baltimore County - Property Tax Exemption - Real Property Owned by Fire Company or Rescue Squad (Delegate Nawrocki)

Dear Madam Chair,

This is to inform you that House Bill 1096 – Baltimore County - Property Tax Exemption - Real Property Owned by Fire Company or Rescue Squad (Delegate Nawrocki) received a **FAVORABLE with Amendments** vote from the Baltimore County Delegation.

I respectfully request that you consider the recommendation of the Baltimore County Delegation when voting on this bill. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eric D. Ebersole".

Eric D. Ebersole
Chairman
Baltimore County Delegation

HB1096.docx (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Director Michael Higgs

Position: INFO

WES MOORE
Governor

ARUNA MILLER
Lt. Governor



MICHAEL HIGGS
Director

MARCUS ALZONA
Deputy Director

301 W. Preston Street, Room 801, Baltimore, Maryland 21201
Legislative Director: Jonathan.Glaser@Maryland.gov
1-888-246-5941 TTY: 1-800-735-2258
www.dat.maryland.gov

HEARING DATE: March 30, 2023

BILL: HB1096

TITLE: Baltimore County - Property Tax Exemption - Real Property Owned by Fire Company or Rescue Squad

SDAT POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

Current law grants the exempt status for a property that: “(ii) is held in an advanced land acquisition program of the fire company or rescue squad.” See Page 2 lines 8 and 9. Furthermore, the law restricts a fire company from an exception if the property “(iii) is leased for not more than 60 days during any 12-month period.” Therefore, the purpose of this bill is unclear.

The bill will allow a Fire Company or Rescue Squad to acquire any type of property, including improved property, and receive an exemption for an indefinite period simply by stating they intend to use the property at some undefined point in time. This will allow a fire company in Baltimore county to receive an exemption from property tax for a property that is leased for more than 60 days during any 12-month period if they state they will use the property in the future.

Under this legislation, the fire company could own and operate a shopping center for 30 years while stating they intend to use the property at the end of that time, and the property will be exempt from taxes for the entire 30-year period.

The Department recommends the following amendment to page 3, lines 8 through 10:

(2) IS UNIMPROVED REAL PROPERTY NOT USED FOR ANY PURPOSE BUT WILL BE ACTUALLY USED EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE FIRE COMPANY OR RESCUE SQUAD IN THE FUTURE.