

SB0414-EEE_MACo_SUP.pdf

Uploaded by: Dominic Butchko

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 414

Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting Within Maryland

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: February 21, 2023

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 414. This bill represents the work product of a broad coalition of stakeholders in the firefighting service. The outlook for firefighting in Maryland is bleak. Retirements are quickly outpacing recruitment and retention, causing a shortfall in personnel and an overuse of those still willing and able to serve. Many communities have even had to call on volunteers who are well into ages 60 and 70 years old for primary response to fire calls. Maryland's leaders must act soon to support this critical public service before it becomes an issue of public safety.

SB 414 is one of MACo's legislative initiatives for the 2023 legislative session, distinguishing this issue as an extremely high priority for all 23 counties and Baltimore City.

Marylanders benefit from a broad network of firefighting services capable of responding to a wide range of emergencies. For several decades now, recruitment and retention have been on the decline. Once a key part of the connective tissue bringing together communities, working as a career and/or volunteer firefighter has lost its appeal. While Maryland's fire service is capable of meeting today's demand, the future looks troubling. Support for these essential first-responders is more important than ever.

SB 414 can take a strong step in the right direction and support our firefighting services by analyzing ways to support modern recruitment and retention efforts.

SB 414 establishes the blue-ribbon Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting Within Maryland and will be tasked with examining two primary areas:

- **The effectiveness and viability of uniform incentives, offerings, or practices employed in other states to attract, support, and retain individuals in firefighting roles; and**
- **The suitability of comparable or similar incentives, offerings, and practices as compared to the landscape of the state.**

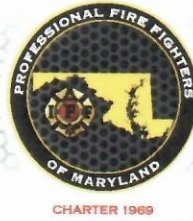
The work that will be advanced by this commission is critical for the health and public safety of Maryland. By bringing together all stakeholders, it will be possible to craft a broad menu of policy options and recommendations at both the state and local level to help bolster firefighting in Maryland. Accordingly, MACo requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 414.

SB414 - PFFMD Written Testimony - J. Buddle (Favor

Uploaded by: Jeffrey Buddle

Position: FAV

PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS OF MARYLAND



DATE: February 21, 2023

TO: Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Jeffrey Buddle, President
Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland

RE: SB414 - Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting - Maryland

The Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland represents more than 10,000 active and retired professional fire fighters and emergency medical services personnel who proudly serve the citizens of the State of Maryland.

We support the establishment of this commission to study recruitment, retention and other important matters within the fire and rescue service in the State of Maryland. Gathering various stakeholders identified in the legislation will ensure a complete view of the issues from a statewide perspective.

The Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland look forward to appointing two individuals to serve as members of the commission for these important discussions.

On behalf of the members of Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland, we respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 414.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey Buddle".

Jeffrey Buddle, President
Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland

The membership of the Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland includes 25 local IAFF affiliates from the following jurisdictions:

Federal: *Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Fort George G. Meade, National Capital Federal Fire Fighters, National Institutes of Health*

State: *Baltimore / Washington International Airport*

Local: *Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City (2 affiliates), Baltimore County, Carroll County, Cecil County, Charles County, Cumberland, Frederick County, Garrett County, Hagerstown, Howard County, Montgomery County, Ocean City, Prince Georges County, Queen Annes County, Salisbury, Talbot County, Worchester County*

BaltimoreCounty_FAV_SB0414.pdf

Uploaded by: Joanne Rund

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.: SB 414

TITLE: Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting Within Maryland

SPONSOR: Senator Augustine

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 21, 2023

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** SB 414 - Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting Within Maryland.

The Baltimore County Fire Department is considered a combination system which is defined as a Career/Volunteer response department. It is comprised of approximately 1000 career members as well as 1000 active response volunteers and another 1000 support system volunteers. In all, these individuals are stationed within 54 emergency response stations – 25 career stations and 29 volunteer stations.

As one of the largest combination emergency response systems in the state of Maryland that provides Fire, Rescue and Emergency Medical Services, the Department is experiencing significant challenges relating to recruitment and retention, both within career and volunteer divisions. This is not unique to Baltimore County as other emergency response departments nationwide are experiencing similar recruitment and retention challenges. The creation of a commission to study practices employed in other states to attract, support, and retain individuals will greatly enhance Maryland's ability to create a sustainability plan for the future.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 414. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.

SB0414.pdf

Uploaded by: Jonathan Dayton

Position: FAV



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

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Chair Senator Brian J. Feldman
February 3, 2023

Dear Committee,

The Allegany Garrett Counties Volunteer Fire Rescue Association is writing you today in full **support** of SB0414: 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.

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SB 414 MSFA Support Letter; Loveless.pdf

Uploaded by: Kathleen Loveless

Position: FAV

MARYLAND STATE FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Representing the Volunteer Fire, Rescue and Emergency Medical Services Personnel



Kate Loveless
Executive Director
2130 Priest Bridge Drive
Suite 4
Crofton, MD 21114
(O) 443-302-2911
(C) 516-666-2351
Email: KLoveless@msfa.org

Education, Energy, and the Environment
Senator Brian J. Feldman; Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan; Vice Chair
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 20, 2023

Greetings from the Maryland State Firemen's Association (MSFA). As Executive Director of the MSFA, I am pleased to be here to offer my testimony in support of Senate Bill 414 (House Bill 0788). When we were approached by a representative from the Maryland Association of Counties last fall, the MSFA was eager to hear what initiatives would be brought forward. When SB 414 was introduced, the MSFA quickly responded with its support.

As we look at the current crisis of recruiting and retaining volunteer fire service members, we look at three main categories that affect our effectiveness at drawing in new members, and keeping the ones that we have; cost, culture, and commitment.

With the ever increasing cost of apparatus, cost to repair facilities, volunteer fire departments are now faced with astronomical fiscal impacts that their local fundraising efforts just cannot cover. Federal and local grants are helpful, but with more and more departments applying, the less funding there is to go around. The MSFA, with the help of its Volunteer Company Assistance Fund (VCAF), we can offer our member companies some financial relief but with those funds at an all-time low and no solid replenishment platform, the assistance we can provide is just not enough.

While we have seen tremendous strides in repairing fire house culture, many departments continue to operate and lose members due to antiquated ways of thinking and not embracing much needed shifts in the way we include others. The cultural divide among the older and younger members is a wall that is becoming more difficult to climb and bridging the age gap has become an obstacle many departments do not know how, or refuse, to overcome.

Although you will find committed individuals in every corner of the state, the difficulty in balancing careers, families and volunteering has made it less attractive to the younger generations. Training hours required for volunteers to ride on apparatus has increased twenty times over in the past 30 years. Volunteer burnout occurs when membership numbers dwindle,

and the weight of responsibility falls on the few. It becomes almost impossible for the members that remain to continue to provide the necessary services. We all know how small changes can create a domino effect, both good and bad. The critical dialogue is happening now where departments are facing closure due to lack of embracing a change in culture.

Recruitment and retention issues are not specific to Maryland. In recent years, our neighboring states of Pennsylvania, with their 2018 release of SR-6, and Ohio, with the more recent January 5th release of the Ohio Governor's Task Force of the Volunteer Fire Services Report & Recommendations, shared their common challenges and goals. Maryland echoes the statement put out in the Ohio Taskforce report that “volunteer fire departments should be adequately funded, properly resourced with equipment that meets the needs of the community and is housed in fire stations that are safe and built to current building standards. Sufficient personnel should be ready to respond to emergencies within a reasonable time.”

The study proposed in SB 414, which forms “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 firefighting roles” is desperately needed to shine a light on our specific challenges, and what we all can do to ensure that our cries for help do not continue to go unheard. Our volunteer departments need us to be their voice and their champion to ensure that doors do not continue to close on their communities.

The Maryland State Firemen’s Association looks forward to being represented on this Commission and partnering with other state organizations to ensure that the invaluable services that our volunteer fire service personnel provide the citizens of Maryland continue and are supported through the years to come. We respectfully ask for a favorable vote on SB 414.

“Things are changing quickly and if we don’t adapt ourselves to these changes, we are going to be the ones who have failed the citizens that we joined the fire service to serve.”

-Daniel “Skip” Mahan

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Loveless". The script is cursive and fluid.

Kate Loveless
MSFA Executive Director

Chief Louis Winston - SB 414 Strengthen Fire Fight

Uploaded by: Meghan Lynch

Position: FAV



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

2201 Warwick Way, Marriottsville, MD 21104
410-313-6000

LOUIS G. WINSTON, FIRE CHIEF • CALVIN BALL, COUNTY EXECUTIVE

February 21, 2023

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

We are writing in support of Senate Bill 414 to establish a Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting Within Maryland.

The Fire Service, on a national level, is currently experiencing challenges in the recruitment and retention of qualified candidates for both the career and volunteer services. Many jurisdictions in this region are competing for the same limited pool of candidates to adequately fill the ranks to acceptable levels. Howard County is often conducting hiring processes for career candidates at the same time as several other jurisdictions in the region. Many applicants will drop out of our process, as they may get an offer from another jurisdiction, prior to the start of our next trainee class. As schedules, pay and benefits are commensurate across the region, applicants will accept the first position offered to them. We also see several fewer applicants in each subsequent hiring process, on a magnitude in the hundreds.

All regional jurisdictions are also attempting to hire credentialed Advanced Life Support providers (Paramedics). Many of the local university and college systems that offer Paramedic curricula have seen a marked decrease in students applying for and pursuing this career field. Likewise, volunteer recruitment and retention have become a challenge, due to many factors, to possibly include; the economy and ever-increasing training requirements to attain and maintain operational requirements of firefighting and Emergency Medical Service delivery. This is certainly true of our volunteer ranks in Howard County.

The establishment of this commission will greatly assist the fire service in Maryland in identifying the key issues in recruitment and retention and identifies the appropriate stakeholders in researching this problem. The inability to adequately recruit and retain qualified career and volunteer personnel could put the safety of our current first responders and the community in jeopardy. Our Fire Department's call volume continues to increase and staffing shortages can lead to provider burnout and a declination in job satisfaction.

We urge a favorable report in support of Senate Bill 414, to ensure fire service recruitment and retention issues in the State of Maryland can be identified and addressed accordingly. This will lead to a safer work environment for our career and volunteer personnel, and result in a more efficient and effective response structure for the citizens and visitors to Howard County.

SB 414_ Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire F

Uploaded by: Theodore Delbridge

Position: FAV



State of Maryland

Maryland Institute *for* Emergency Medical Services Systems

Wes Moore
Governor

Clay B. Stamp
Chairman, EMS Board

Theodore R. Delbridge, MD, MPH
Executive Director

SB 414 Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting within Maryland

MIEMSS Position: Support

Bill Summary: SB 414 establishes a Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting within Maryland to study and make recommendations for recruiting and retaining fire fighters in Maryland. The Commission's findings and recommendations are to be submitted on or before December 1, 2023.

Rationale:

- Fire fighters are an integral part of Maryland's emergency medical services (EMS) system. They are routinely dispatched on calls for EMS services and as first responders, provide early treatment and stabilization until more advanced care arrives.
- Additionally, fire fighters are dispatched to the scene of motor vehicle collisions to secure a safe scene for EMS clinicians, the victims, and the public and assist with extrication of victims, etc.
- There are numerous jurisdictions across the state that have cross-trained personnel that respond to EMS calls. EMS is closely connected with the fire service in Maryland, both volunteer and career.
- Fire fighters and EMS Clinicians work together as partners. Effective recruitment and retention of fire fighters impacts Maryland's overall EMS system.
- The Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting in Maryland will create a forum to identify ways to attract, support and retain fire fighters in Maryland.

MIEMSS Supports SB 414 and requests a Favorable Report.

BaltimoreCounty_FAV_SB0414.pdf

Uploaded by: Twana Allen

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.: SB 414

TITLE: Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting Within Maryland

SPONSOR: Senator Augustine

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 21, 2023

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** SB 414 - Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting Within Maryland.

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Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 414. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.

SB 414, FAV, Tom Coe, LS23.pdf

Uploaded by: Victoria Venable

Position: FAV



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

DIVISION OF FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES

Office of the Chief

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

Thomas E. Coe, Chief

SB0414 – Commission to Advance and Strengthen Firefighting within Maryland

DATE: February 21, 2023
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy & Environment
POSITION: **SUPPORT**
FROM: Thomas E. Coe, Chief, Division of Fire and Rescue Services, Frederick County Government

Thank you for your consideration of SB0414 – Commission to Advance and Strengthen Firefighting within Maryland. As the Chief of the Frederick County Division of Fire and Rescue Services, I urge the committee to give SB 0414 a FAVORABLE report.

SB0414 draws attention to what has been a growing national issue over the last 40 years in the fire service, a severe decline in the number of citizens applying to join both the career and volunteer fire service ranks. This bill establishes a Commission 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 firefighting roles.”

In Frederick County alone, the number of operational volunteers in our jurisdiction has declined from over 1,000 in the year 2000 to less than 500 in 2023. Many of those who remain actively engaged are 60 years or more of age. There are many factors that are driving this decline and they are not issues specific to Maryland, but we are best positioned as a State to examine the issues and make recommendations to change our current course.

The decrease in the number of volunteer responders drives an increase in the need for more career firefighters, a segment of our population where we have also noted a decline in applicants. Five years ago, a recruitment drive for career firefighters would have yielded over 1,200 applications. Last year a recruitment drive in Frederick County netted a mere 450 applicants, a 62% decrease. Also of note, those 450 applications are coming from applicants from further across the country than in years past.

The Fire Service is suffering a recruitment and retention crisis. If this crisis continues without corrective action, staffing levels and response times will suffer. That means that our citizens may not receive the critical services they request at the time of the most dire need. I look forward to the outcome of the Commission, particularly recommendations of best practices and the establishment of programs that will not only attract more personnel to the fire service but also incentivize incumbent public safety providers to remain active.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 0414. On behalf of Frederick County Government, I strongly urge a FAVORABLE report.

Submitted By:

Chief Thomas E. Coe, Frederick County Division of Fire and Rescue Services

Phone: (301)-600-1780

E-Mail: TCoe@frederickcountymd.gov

SB 414 -FWA- MML.pdf

Uploaded by: Angelica Bailey

Position: FWA



Maryland Municipal League

The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

February 21, 2023

Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

Bill: SB 414 – Commission to Advance and Strengthen Fire Fighting Within Maryland

Position: Support with amendments

Reason for Position:

MML strongly supports SB 414, the creation of a Commission to recruit and retain career and volunteer firefighters in our State. We also greatly appreciate our meaningful inclusion on the Commission, as local governments employ/incentivize career and volunteer firefighter services for our communities. As the bill's preamble states, we all benefit from strong and efficient fire, rescue, and emergency medical service response systems at the county and local levels. This Commission is an excellent step towards ensuring firefighting services can continue.

However, emergency medical service (EMS) providers include more than firefighters. Some fire departments have firefighter-only roles, while others require being cross-trained as a firefighter/Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). Municipal EMS providers are experiencing acute shortages in all EMS functions. Including EMS positions in this study would help local governments support our heroes and ensure the safety of our residents.

With adoption of these amendments, MML would respectfully request a favorable report.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Theresa Kuhns
Angelica Bailey Thupari, Esq.
Bill Jorch
Justin Fiore

Chief Executive Officer
Director, Advocacy & Public Affairs
Director, Public Policy
Deputy Director, Advocacy & Public Affairs

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