

To Chairman Feldman and distinguished members of the Education, Energy and Environment committee: My name is Melissa Bragg, and I serve as the President of the Worcester County Professional Firefighter's Association. I also serve as the 2nd Vice President for the Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland. I am submitting testimony in support of SB 823, which would provide a discount on annual state park passes for law enforcement officers and first responders.

Simply put, law enforcement officers and firefighters are some of the most stressful professions. PTSD and related mental health issues are a very real part of our jobs, considering the amount of trauma and negativity we see daily, compounded by years and years of working.

We are fortunate to have so many beautiful state parks in Maryland. Our state parks can provide much needed rest and relaxation for our first responders. For some, this might provide the necessary respite they require to help heal and have good mental and physical health. The National Institute for Mental Health even suggests those suffering from PTSD, "should seek out comforting places," as a coping mechanism.

Our law enforcement officers and firefighters put their lives on the line daily to keep our communities safe and protected. I feel that a discount on state park passes is a small token to help them stay healthy and focused for themselves, their families and their jobs. I urge a favorable report on SB 823. Thank you for your consideration.