

February 28, 2023

Kumar P. Barve, Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

251 Taylor House Office Building, 6 Bladen Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Barve & Members of the Committee

**The Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland support House Bill 769 (HB769)**

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of HB769. I am Tom Skinner, and I am the First Vice President of the Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland (PFFMD) and an active Fire Lieutenant with the Baltimore City Fire Department, serving for over 31 years. The PFFMD represents over 10,000 active Fire Fighters and Paramedics across the great state of Maryland. I would also, like to thank Delegate Long for sponsoring this vital piece of Public Safety legislation.

The goal of HB769 is to ensure the fire safety systems in commercial, industrial, and public buildings in Maryland are safe. HB769 requires the periodic inspection and testing of fire dampers, smoke dampers, and smoke control systems by trained professionals. These dampers and smoke control systems regulate the flow and movement of fire and smoke through heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. The successful operation of these systems can be the difference between life and death and the difference between a minor fire and a major conflagration.

HB769 will make buildings safer in Maryland. Currently, sprinkler systems, fire alarms, and fire extinguishers are periodically inspected to ensure they are working. However, through an accidental oversight, components like fire dampers, smoke dampers, and smoke control systems are not clearly subject to inspection and testing requirements.

HB769 would bring Maryland in line with the approved standards of the National Fire Protection Association. NFPA Standards 80, 92, and 105 each speak to these systems and the necessary inspections and their inspection requirements. This Bill will bring Maryland to the minimum standards.

The research provided in the paper titled “Reliability of Fire Dampers, Smoke Dampers and Smoke Control Systems” by James Milke and Robert Ayoub of the Department of Fire Protection Engineering, the University of Maryland, May 3, 2021, provides comprehensive data to support our concerns.

This Bill will protect the lives of Marylanders and Fire Fighters! The PFFMD asks for a favorable report on **House Bill 769**.

Sincerely,

Tom Skinner  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland