



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Fire/EMS Department Headquarters

Angela D. Alsobrooks
County Executive

Office of the Fire Chief

February 27, 2024

Maryland Senate
Education, Energy, & Environment Committee
EEE Committee Room
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

To Whom It May Concern,

I am submitting written testimony in favor of Senate Bill 691 "Higher Education – Firefighters and EMS Recruitment and Retention – Scholarship and Loan Repayment Assistance." This Bill is the work product of the Commission to Advance and Strengthen Firefighting and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Within Maryland, of which I was the Co-Chair. This Commission comprised of stakeholders from numerous Fire/EMS Departments and affiliated organizations throughout Maryland. The Commission worked for months to develop suggestions to enhance the recruitment and retention of Fire/EMS members throughout the state, including those represented in Senate Bill 691.

This Bill will strengthen the Charles W. Riley Firefighter and Ambulance and Rescue Squad Member Scholarship Program by expanding the program to cover 100% of the cost of tuition and mandatory fees for in-state community college and for undergraduate education, as well as 50% of tuition and mandatory fees for graduate education. It will also expand the number of programs that qualify for funding while clarifying the terms of the funding. Additionally, this Bill will create the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Firefighters and EMS Providers, which is modeled after the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program for Police Officers. Finally, Senate Bill 691 will explore additional recommendations from the Commission related to childcare and healthcare. Firefighter and EMT access to adequate childcare and healthcare was identified as a critical barrier to recruitment and retention, and this bill will allow for continued investigation and analysis of these proposed solutions.

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Thank you for your review and favorable consideration of State Bill 691, which contains initiatives especially critical during a nationwide firefighter shortage. Successful recruitment and retention of firefighters and EMTs throughout the state is critical to the safety and wellbeing of all Marylanders. Your support will make a positive difference for Firefighters, EMTs, and communities statewide.

Sincerely,



Tiffany D. Green,
Fire Chief