



CHARLES COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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February 28, 2024

Bill: SENATE BILL 691 Higher Education - Firefighters and EMS Recruitment and Retention - Scholarship and Loan Repayment Assistance
Committee: Senate – Education, Energy, and the Environment
Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chairwoman Kagan, and Members:

On behalf of the County Commissioners for Charles County, this letter is to express support for SB 691 – Higher Education - Firefighters and EMS Recruitment and Retention - Scholarship and Loan Repayment Assistance. SB 691 provides a much-needed recruitment and retention tool for fire fighter and emergency medical services personnel. The U.S. is facing critical staffing shortages in EMS workers, which is undoubtedly a literal matter of life and death. Aggressive recruitment and retention efforts for Maryland’s firefighter and EMS workforce are needed to ensure these essential functions are fully staffed.

SB 691 Strengthens the Charles W. Riley Firefighter and Ambulance and Rescue Squad Member Scholarship Program with additional eligible educational expenses for career or volunteer firefighter or ambulance or rescue squad member. Additionally, SB 691 establishes a new program for awarding student loan assistance to firefighters and EMS personnel based on years of service, rank, and other criteria established by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC).

Local governments, and Charles County in particular, need the General Assembly to assist us with finding additional ways to keep firefighters and EMS personnel engaged in the field. SB 691 is the first step increasing the capacity of these essential workers, and ultimately keeping our communities safe. For the reasons stated herein, we encourage a FAVORABLE report on SB 691. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our support.

Sincerely,

Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq., President
County Commissioners of Charles County

cc: Charles County Delegation