



February 28, 2024

Senate Bill 691

**Higher Education - Firefighters and EMS Recruitment and Retention -
Scholarship and Loan Repayment Assistance**

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 691 – Higher Education - Firefighters and EMS Recruitment and Retention - Scholarship and Loan Repayment Assistance

Governor Moore has made clear that public safety is a top priority for his administration, and Anne Arundel County fully supports efforts to recruit and retain public safety officials. Marylanders have safe and thriving communities when we show our values and invest in our police, fire, and emergency service providers.

While Maryland can boast one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, public safety recruitment is still an area that needs to be improved. Local jurisdictions across the state have to compete against one another for quality public safety recruits, and this results in counties not having the sufficient personnel to safeguard our communities. Anne Arundel County is no stranger to this issue, and while we are taking necessary steps at the county level, more can be done.

Senate Bill 691 establishes the Maryland Loan Repayment Assistance Program for Firefighters and EMS, which will invest heavily in our local fire departments and ensure that our frontline public servants are valued and have the resources to stay within their jurisdictions. This bill also alters the Charles W. Riley Scholarship and expands accessibility to all higher education programs. These provisions will give hardworking firefighters and medical providers a financial and educational incentive to continue doing the dedicated work they do without dealing with debts that may force them to leave their profession.

For all of these reasons, Anne Arundel County respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 691.