



Maryland State Firemen's Association

Fire Police Committee

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Senator William C. Smith Jr., Chair
Senator Jeff Waldsteicher, Vice Chair
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Greetings from the Maryland State Firemen's Association ("MSFA"). As a Past President, Co-Chair of the MSFA Fire Police Committee, I am pleased to offer my testimony in support of Senate Bill 0838. The safety of our 1st responders is a top priority and the proposed changes provided by this bill will provide for the safety of our volunteers by allowing them to be more visible as they perform their duties.

The MSFA represents over 350 volunteer fire, EMS, and rescue companies with about 28,000 members in the State of Maryland. These men and women that volunteer at the fire, EMS, and rescue companies provide a vital service to their communities. They are called upon at all hours of the day and night to respond to the emergencies and needs of others.

Currently, each volunteer fire company can have up to five of their officer's display red lights on their private vehicles while on route to or at the scene of an emergency. SB 0838 will allow red, or **red and white** lights or signal devices. Contrasting lights have been proven to be more visible and are consistent with the lights used on fire and EMS response vehicles.

Many communities in the State rely on volunteers to respond to fire, EMS and rescue emergencies. A number of these communities have volunteer fire police that respond in their own private vehicles to help direct traffic at the scene of an emergency. They also assist their local Police Department in traffic control and special events. Fire police are currently allowed to have red lights displayed on their vehicles while at the scene. SB 0838 would allow the fire police to have red, **red and green**, or **red and white** to help make them more visible while at the scene of an emergency.

Not all communities utilize fire police, but for those communities that do, the fire police provide a vital service at the scene of an emergency to help drivers navigate around the incident and to protect the 1st responders at the scene. The current red lights alone may not have the contrast or visibility to alert drivers of the presence of the fire police. Studies have shown that contrasting lights, particularly the use of green lights, have been shown to be effective. Studies suggest that humans can differentiate more shades of green than any other color.

Green lights have a longer wave length than other colors, allowing them to penetrate through fog and other weather conditions more effectively, which enhances their visibility.

The State of Maryland has recognized the effectiveness of green lights and have added the use of green lights, along with amber lights, to highway maintenance and service equipment. In addition to Maryland, the states of Michigan, Texas, Missouri, and Wisconsin have added green lights to their state highway equipment.

Responding to incidents on the highways is inherently dangerous. Nationwide, 45 responders were struck and killed in 2023, and 10 responders have been struck and killed to date in 2024. For 2024 in January there was 4 struck by LODD deaths and in just 3 weeks in February there has been 6 struck by LODD with the last one on 2/20/2024.

On incidents on the highway your Fire Police are the advance warning as the scene of accident or major incidents that blocks the highway. With the use of the **red and green or red and white** lights it help them to warn the driving public of an incident. The use of **amber and green lights** implied a greater sense of urgency or level of hazard being approached than did the amber only or amber and other color lights.

The use of the **red and green** lights will not interfere with other operations that use green light as the Fire Police or traffic control personal will be away from the scene of the incident. This can prevent confusion on the road and help drivers quickly identify which type of emergency vehicle is on the scene.

In summary, the use of **red and green**, or **red and white** lights will help improve visibility and can enhance roadway safety at emergency scenes. Further, the lights can help differentiate between fire police and law enforcement vehicles.

We respectfully request a favorable vote on SB 0838.

Respectfully submitted,
Robert "Bob" Cumberland
MSFA President 1987-1988