

Maryland State Firefighters Association

Representing The Volunteer Fire, Rescue, And EMS Personnel of Maryland.



Legislative Committee
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SB 190: Law Enforcement – Wellness Checks – Requirements (Gabriel’s Law)

My name is Robert Phillips, I am the Legislative Committee Chair for the Maryland State Firefighters Association (MSFA). The MSFA represents the 25,000 plus volunteer Fire/EMS and Rescue first responders across the state.

I wish to present testimony in favor of Senate Bill 190: Law Enforcement – Wellness Checks – Requirements (Gabriel’s Law)

The MSFA fully supports the adoption of this bill. The MSFA looks at a “wellness check” as a function of **Law Enforcement**. This bill addresses changes in the present law applying to law enforcement only. The cross file to this bill HB404 has been amended to include “fire, rescue and emergency medical services entities”. The MSFA and volunteer fire service feel that we should not be included in this bill in any manner.

Law enforcement is trained and equipped to handle a “wellness check” ranging from someone not answering a phone call to the call where the person in question is having a mental health issue. Fire, rescue and emergency medical entities are not trained to address mental health issues and not equipped properly should they arise. Just last week a fire department first responder was shot doing a “wellness check” in the duties of their job.

The MSFA has asked their member companies and fire associations to respond and comment as to their thoughts on HB404. In the last 24 hours we have had responses from 9 counties covering 143 fire companies with all being opposed with no company being in favor of the amended bill.

The MSFA supports this bill as written and asks that this bill not be amended to include “fire, rescue or emergency medical entities” in it.

Thank you for your attention to this very important bill and I ask for your favorable report on SB 190.

I will be glad to answer any questions you may have for me.

