

MARYLAND STATE FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION

REPRESENTING THE VOLUNTEER FIRE, RESCUE, AND EMS PERSONNEL OF MARYLAND.



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SB476: Workers' Compensation – Occupational Disease Presumptions – First Responders (Caring for Public Employees in the Safety Professions – CAPES Act)

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 476: Workers' Compensation – Occupational Disease Presumptions – First Responders (Caring for Public Employees in the Safety Professions – CAPES Act)

The MSFA fully supports the adoption of this bill. We have seen first hand the toll that is taken physically on our volunteer and career firefighters on a daily basis. Our firefighters are called to deal with a large number of hazardous conditions from a person smelling something odd to a fully involved structure fire to the spill of the unknown chemical. In every case we are exposed to harmful chemicals on a more frequent basis than the average person and to some extent a longer period of time. Many of these chemicals have been found to be leading causes of cancers in humans. Through studies it has been found that firefighters exposed to these chemicals will and do develop these cancers and the fact that they were more likely to have encountered them during their actions as firefighters than in everyday life. This bill allows for a firefighter to work through Workers' Compensation for treatment without having to show the one call that may have caused this issue. The fact that they were exposed to whatever the chemical was during their time acting in the capacity of their professional or volunteer position should be enough to qualify for proper treatment through this program and its benefits.

I thank the committee for their time and attention to this important bill and ask that you vote favorable on Senate Bill 476.

I will now be glad to answer any questions, or my contact information is listed above and welcome any further inquiries you might have.