



March 11, 2025

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair
Senate Education, Energy, & Environment Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Position: FAVORABLE

Re: SB1024 Higher Education – Nonresident Tuition – Exemption for Dependents of State or Local Public Safety Employees (Maryland Fallen Heroes Tuition Benefits Act)

The Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland represents more than 10,000 active and retired professional fire fighters and emergency medical services personnel who proudly serve the citizens of the State of Maryland.

I am honored to submit this testimony in strong support of the proposed legislation that grants in-state tuition benefits to the surviving dependents of Maryland's public safety employees who have tragically lost their lives in the line of duty. This measure is a meaningful and necessary step in recognizing the sacrifices made by these dedicated professionals and ensuring that their families receive the support they deserve.

Every day, Maryland's firefighters, emergency medical personnel, law enforcement officers, correctional officers, and members of the Maryland National Guard put their lives on the line to protect and serve our communities. Their commitment to public safety comes with inherent risks, and tragically, some do not return home to their families. When such a loss occurs, it leaves behind not only an irreplaceable void but also significant financial and emotional burdens on their surviving dependents.

This legislation would provide in-state and in-county tuition benefits for those dependents, granting them the opportunity to pursue an education at any public institution of higher education within the State of Maryland. By removing financial barriers to education, we can ensure that the children and dependents of our fallen heroes have the chance to build a stable and prosperous future.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) would oversee the implementation of this program, developing an application process and verifying eligibility in coordination with the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System and other relevant agencies. The benefits would be granted only to those who meet the admission requirements of the respective institutions, ensuring that recipients are prepared for academic success.

This initiative is not only an act of gratitude but also a demonstration of Maryland's unwavering commitment to those who serve and protect. Supporting the families of fallen public safety employees is both a moral obligation and a practical investment in our community. Furthermore, this benefit imposes little to no financial burden on the state while yielding invaluable benefits to affected families and society as a whole.

On behalf of the members of Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland, we strongly urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 1023.

Submitted respectfully,



Jeffrey Buddle, President
Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland

The membership of the Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland includes 25 IAFF local affiliates from the following jurisdictions:

Federal: Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Fort George G. Meade, National Capital Federal Fire Fighters

State: Baltimore / Washington International Airport

Local: Annapolis City, Allegany County, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City (2 affiliates), Baltimore County, Carroll County, Cecil County, Charles County, Cumberland City, Frederick County, Garrett County, Hagerstown, Howard County, Montgomery County, Ocean City, Prince Georges County, Queen Annes County, Salisbury, Talbot County, Worchester County