



## FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

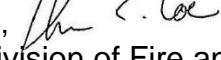
### DIVISION OF FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES

Office of the Chief

Jessica Fitzwater  
County Executive

Thomas E. Coe, Chief

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

Written Testimony from: Chief Thomas E. Coe,   
Frederick County Division of Fire and Rescue Services

Position: Favorable

Committee: Education, Energy, Environment

Date: March 7, 2025

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Numerous public safety employees who risk their lives everyday to protect Marylanders live outside of our state. When the unthinkable happens and a first responder loses their life in the line of duty in Maryland, sometimes their surviving family members fall through the cracks of certain benefits that are provided to the survivors of our fallen heroes.

On August 11, 2021, the Frederick County Division of Fire and Rescue Services lost Battalion Chief Josh Laird. Battalion Chief Laird died in the line of duty while operating on the scene of a house fire in the Ijamsville area of Frederick County. Josh was survived by his wife and two school aged daughters.

Josh's oldest daughter is about to graduate high school and is actively working on planning for college. While she is eligible for the Edward T. and Mary A. Conroy Memorial Scholarship Program, she would still be responsible to pay tens of thousand dollars to attend a Maryland University as she resides in Fairfield, Pennsylvania.

Through Josh's selfless service to Marylander's his children should receive the same line of duty death benefits as those families who reside in Maryland. Senate Bill 1024 will fix that issue by exempting a financially dependent child of a state or local public safety employee who dies as a result of or in the course of performance of duties from paying out-of-state or out-of-county tuition at a public institution of higher education in the state.

In support of the surviving families Maryland's fallen heroes, I urge a **FAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 1024.