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Support for SB 164 – Terminology and Obsolete References - Maryland State Firefighters Association and Related Terms

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee,

The Maryland Commission for Women is in strong support of Senate Bill 164, which formally updates the statute to use gender neutral terms "firefighter" and "squad member" instead of the antiquated "firefighter" and "squadman." This proposal comes after the Maryland State Firefighters Association (MSFA) made the formal decision to adopt a new, inclusive name.

On June 18, 2024, the MSFA made history by officially announcing its transition to the Maryland State Firefighters Association—a change that honors the service of all firefighters, regardless of gender and signals to future generations of female firefighters that they are fully welcomed in the profession.

The Maryland Commission for Women is charged with working across the state to advance women's workplace rights and opportunities. We worked for several years with the association formerly known as the Maryland State Firemen's Association to urge them to take this step to modernize its name. Now, we are making a similar request to the legislature to update the statute to reflect the same inclusivity.

SB 164 is a necessary next step in ensuring that Maryland's laws reflect this progress. Updating outdated references in state statute will reinforce our commitment to gender equity and ensure that Maryland's firefighters—men and women alike—are properly recognized for their contributions.

The Commission respectfully urges this committee to pass SB 164 and affirm the inclusive vision set forth by the Maryland State Firefighters Association.

Thank you for your time and consideration.