



# Baltimore Fire Officers Association

Local No. 964

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CHARTERED FEBRUARY 20, 1948



March 7, 2025

Maryland Senate Finance Committee  
3 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
ATTN: Chair Pamela Beidle and Vice Chair Antonio Hayes

**SENT VIA EMAIL**

RE: **Support for SB 1023 Employment Discrimination – Fire and Rescue Public Safety Employees – Use of Medical Cannabis**

Dear Chair Beidle and Esteemed Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1023, which seeks to close the gap that has existed for over a decade between the use of medical cannabis for the treatment of a multitude of serious conditions and professional firefighters who are prohibited from their use. This is the case even though the use of such medication would occur off duty and off site.

I will tell you two stories as to why this legislation is important to us. First, I'd like to tell you about Michelle. Michelle worked for the fire department for twenty-five years. She was the first woman to be promoted to the rank of Emergency Vehicle Driver in the Department's history. She received many commendations and recognitions over her career. She did all this after overcoming an addiction to opiates as a young woman prior to her employment in the fire department.

Tragically, she lost one of her legs below the knee in a motorcycle accident. Despite this, she fought to return to work. After months of rehabilitation, she took the physical return to duty examination and was the first person in the history of the department to pass all the requirements with a prosthetic limb.

The only hurdle that remained was how to treat her pain. She was adamant with her doctors that she would not take prescribed opiates or narcotics because of their addictive properties. After

convincing from a close friend, she tried medical cannabis. She was shocked to find out how well it treated her pain and that it had no addictive properties. Unfortunately, the fire department prohibits any use of medical cannabis, even though it is off duty, and she had no way to treat the pain. Therefore, she had to retire early from the service, despite being absolutely ready, willing, and able to do the job.

Second, I'd like to tell you about Mike. Mike is a captain in the fire department. Mike was in an apartment building when it exploded from a gas leak. He suffered musculoskeletal injuries and burns. Weeks after treatment, he began to experience post-traumatic stress disorder and difficulty sleeping. His doctor prescribed him cannabis for the PTSD and sleep dysrhythmia. He knew that it was prohibited by department policy, so he asked for an exemption. One year later, the department responded that he was not permitted to do so. Mike then filed for an accommodation with the Maryland Human Relations Commission. It has been approximately a year and a half, and the Commission has not responded. During all this time, Mike has had tremendous difficulty sleeping and maintaining a circadian rhythm as he is unable to take the medication prescribed by a doctor because of department policy. He must soon choose between his health and his career.

Michelle, Mike, and countless others like them are the reasons we support SB1023. It is patently unfair to withhold this medication from those who need it the most, often from illness and injuries suffered in the course of their public duties serving the citizens of our great State. Please think of Michelle, Mike, and all of us when considering this bill and return a favorable report.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joshua L. Fannon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joshua L. Fannon, President  
IAFF Local 964 Baltimore Fire Officers

CC: Mr. Jeffrey Buddle, President, Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland