



March 11, 2025

Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Position: FAVORABLE

Re: SB1023 Employment Discrimination – Fire and Rescue Public Safety Employees –
Use of Medical Cannabis

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.

We submit this written testimony in strong support of a medical exemption for firefighters that protects them from discipline, discharge, or discrimination related to their lawful use of medical cannabis. Our brave fire and rescue personnel put their lives on the line daily to protect our communities, often at great personal risk. It is imperative that we provide them with access to the medical care they need, including physician-approved cannabis treatments, without fear of employment repercussions.

Firefighters endure extreme physical and psychological stress due to the nature of their work. Many suffer from chronic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other debilitating conditions resulting from the hazards they face in the line of duty. Traditional treatment options, such as opioids and other prescription medications, can have dangerous side effects, including dependency, cognitive impairment, and a reduced ability to function effectively. Medical cannabis has been recognized as a safer, viable alternative that allows firefighters to manage their symptoms while maintaining their ability to perform at the highest level.

Despite the proven medical benefits of cannabis, outdated employment policies continue to penalize firefighters who otherwise would be able to legally use it under a doctor's supervision.

This contradiction between medical necessity and employment policies places firefighters in an untenable position—forcing them to choose between their health and their career. Such a choice is neither just nor in the public interest.

To ensure fairness and to promote the well-being of our firefighters, SB1023 would provide for the following:

1. **Prohibits Disciplinary Action** – Firefighters using medical cannabis legally under state law should not face termination, suspension, or other disciplinary measures solely due to their off-duty, responsible use.
2. **Prevents Discharge** – No firefighter should be dismissed from their position due to their lawful use of medical cannabis when it does not impair their job performance.
3. **Protects Against Discrimination** – Firefighters should not experience adverse employment actions, including loss of promotions, shifts, or benefits, based on their status as a medical cannabis patient.
4. **Prevents Employment Limitations** – Employers should not limit, segregate, or classify firefighters in any way that would deprive or tend to deprive them of employment opportunities or otherwise adversely affect their status as employees.
5. **Clarifies Employer Policies** – The bill would **not** prohibit employers from adopting policies or procedures that:
 - Prohibit a firefighter from performing their duties while impaired by medical cannabis.
 - Prohibit a firefighter from using medical cannabis within 12 hours before reporting for a work assignment.

Protecting firefighters from discriminatory employment actions strengthens our emergency response system by ensuring that those who serve our communities are given the medical freedom and job security they deserve.

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