

11 March 2025

Honorable Members of the Maryland House HGO Committee:

My name is Mike Chrvala, and I am submitting this written testimony in FAVOR of House Bill 16. I was born in New Jersey and currently live in Towson. I recently retired from a 30 year teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade history and social studies in Carroll County at Shiloh Middle School. I'm the son of a career fire fighter, and the father of a professional firefighter in Maryland. On 9/11, I was in my classroom and my reaction was that our world was never going to be the same.

In the years since 9/11, I did everything I could to keep the promise we made to Never Forget, but with each passing year, I noticed my students understanding less and less about that day. To help teach this upcoming generation about 9/11 and about the heroism and sense of unity we observed, I started my own extra-curricular 9/11 Education Project to take a select group of kids to the WTC site, 9/11 Memorial and build personal connections with over 50 families of FDNY firefighters who made the ultimate sacrifice that Tuesday morning twenty-four years ago. Over 18 years, I personally led over 700 students in this project, with powerful results. Many of the students involved are still in contact with the families they worked with and do what they can to speak the names of their firefighters, tell their stories, and honor their memories.

I can attest that each year, teachers and administrators struggle with a unified and consistent way to remember 9/11. I'm here today as a voice of the Maryland education community to encourage the State of Maryland to embrace and adopt the Freedom Flag to help us keep the promise to Never Forget. I'm also here as a voice for my students, many of whom still contact me to thank me for helping them learn about 9/11 and how shaped them as Americans and broadened their understanding of the world we live in today.

In closing, I personally would like the State of Maryland adopt the Freedom Flag as its official symbol of remembrance for 9/11 because as a nation we promised to Never Forget.

Thank you for considering this important legislation!

Sincerely,

Mike Chrvala

212 Regester Avenue

Baltimore MD 21212

njchrvala@gmail.com