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WOMEN LEGISLATORS OF MARYLAND
THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

February 24, 2025

To: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee

On behalf of the Maryland Women's Caucus, we are pleased to express our unanimous support for **HB 580: Terminology and Obsolete References – Maryland State Firefighters Association and Related Terms**. This important legislation updates outdated, gendered terminology in state law, such as replacing “firemen” and “rescue squad men” with more inclusive terms like **firefighters**, ensuring that all of Maryland's first responders are properly recognized and represented.

For decades, women and non-male first responders have served with distinction, yet they continue to be excluded by antiquated language that does not reflect the reality of today's workforce. **HB 580** affirms the contributions of all firefighters and emergency responders, regardless of gender, and ensures that Maryland's laws reflect a modern, inclusive approach to public service.

This bill is not merely about terminology—it is about representation, inclusion, and equity. **Words matter**, and by updating these references, Maryland sends a strong message to young women and girls that they belong in the fire service and emergency response fields. Removing outdated language also promotes diversity and respect within our public safety agencies, reinforcing the values of fairness and equal opportunity.

We respectfully urge the **Health and Government Operations Committee** to issue a **favorable report** for **HB 580**. By passing this legislation, Maryland will take an important step toward ensuring that all first responders—regardless of gender—are acknowledged and appreciated for their dedication and service to our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your commitment to making Maryland a more equitable and inclusive state.