

LAW OFFICE OF HILLEL TRAUB, P.A.

1777 REISTERSTOWN ROAD • SUITE 22-W • BALTIMORE, MD 21208
TELEPHONE (410) 580-1100 • FAX (410) 580-1101
www.TraubLaw.com / Traublaw@Gmail.com

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Testimony in Support of SB 1030 – Baltimore County and Baltimore City - Vehicle Laws - Lighting on Privately Owned Vehicles

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Hillel Traub, and I am counsel for Hatzalah of Baltimore, a nonprofit volunteer emergency medical services organization servicing the citizens of Northwest Baltimore and surrounding areas of Baltimore County.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 1030 – Baltimore County and Baltimore City - Vehicle Laws - Lighting on Privately Owned Vehicles, which provides additional clarification to existing law and specifies the authorization of not more than five of the highest ranking officers from certain nonprofit volunteer emergency medical services (EMS) organizations located in Baltimore County and Baltimore City to have their privately owned vehicles equipped with red and white lights.

At present, Maryland law allows not more than five of the highest-ranking officers from volunteer emergency services to have their privately owned vehicles equipped with red or red and white lights but does not specifically call out volunteer emergency medical service organizations.

In 2020 the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) authorized the five senior officers of a local volunteer emergency medical service operating in Baltimore City and surrounding areas of Baltimore County since 2008 to equip their vehicles with emergency lighting under the existing law. However, after a review in 2024, wanting to ensure it was operating within acceptable authority, the MVA requested the law be amended to clarify and specifically include this authorization. Senate Bill 1030 seeks to merely add the specific instance requested by the MVA with limitations to ensure that only five senior members of the organization can be authorized.

Critical Reasons for This Change

1. **Shortage of Resources/ Increase of EMS Calls:** With budgetary constraints throughout the state affecting all services, there are fewer and fewer EMS resources available to serve the citizens. Additionally, over the last decade the number of citizens in need of EMS has skyrocketed; causing the already strained resources to be stretched thin. Volunteer services like the ones affected by Senate Bill 1030 continue to be desperately needed to fill the gaps wherever possible.

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- 2. Increase in Traffic:** The area covered by these types of organizations is relatively small, and they were previously successfully able to operate without any kind of emergency lighting in their vehicles. However, with the significant increase in congestion in 2020, the use of emergency lighting for high priority calls became a true necessity.

Urging Your Support for Senate Bill 1030

Senate Bill 1030 is important to ensure the citizens of Baltimore City and surrounding areas of Baltimore County continue to receive rapid EMS care when seconds truly matter. I ask for your thoughtful consideration and your vote in favor of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

H Traub

Hillel Traub, Esquire