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Good Afternoon,

I'm Colin Campbell, an Assistant State's Attorney with Howard County. I'm here to express strong support for HB 0943 and extend my gratitude to Delegate Toles for sponsoring this crucial bill.

As an ASA since 2018, I've prosecuted criminal cases including arson. I've been a volunteer firefighter at the Providence Volunteer Fire Company in Baltimore County for over 15 years and have completed the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute's Fire Investigator course, bringing a unique perspective to the table.

I've personally prosecuted cases of Malicious Burning and Arson that have resulted in injury to Howard County Firefighters and Investigators. Further, I have had the defendant's motion for judgment of acquittal granted for reckless endangerment of a named firefighter where the bench found that was not the legislative intent of that charge. Ultimately leaving the State without any means of seeking justice for an injured victim.

The reclassification of Arson 1 in 2022 by the Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy noted the substantial risk of harm posed to both dwelling inhabitants and first responders.ⁱ At least 22 other states include firefighter injury in their arson and malicious burning statutes or provide for an enhanced penalty where a firefighter injury occurs. In the Fourth Circuit alone, three other states include firefighter injury in their arson and malicious burning statutes or sentencing structure.

Along with providing justice for injured firefighters, this legislation acts as a further deterrent toward eliminating the use of fire-setting for criminal goals. However, this legislation would still require the State to first prove a malicious burning occurred and does not impact the elements or evidentiary standard of the arson-related criminal charges.

In conclusion, I appreciate your time and attention to this matter. I am here to seek a favorable report from the committee on HB 0943, which will contribute to ensuring the safety and well-being of our firefighters. Thank you.

Thank you,

Colin Campbell
Assistant State's Attorney

ⁱ *Offense Type Reclassification for Arson, 1st Degree*, Guidelines E-News Vol. 17, No. 3 (MD. ST. COMMISSION ON CRIM. SENT'G POL'Y), Oct. 2022, at 1, <https://msccsp.org/news/>.