

SB 212 Letter of Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Adam Streight

Position: FAV

Adam Streight
County Executive

Dan Schneckenburger
Director of Administration



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CECIL COUNTY, MARYLAND
Office of the County Executive
200 Chesapeake Boulevard, Suite 2100, Elkton, MD 21921

January 26, 2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair
Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: **Letter of Support for Senate Bill 212** – Higher Education – Nonresident Tuition – Exemption for Dependents of State or Local Public Safety Employees (Maryland Fallen Heroes Tuition Benefits Act).

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

As Cecil County Executive and a retired law enforcement officer, I write in strong **support** of Senate Bill 212, which appropriately recognizes the extraordinary sacrifices made by Maryland's public safety professionals and their families. When individuals dedicate their lives to protecting our communities, their families share in that commitment—and in the risks that accompany it. SB 212 honors that service by ensuring that, in the event of the ultimate sacrifice, a fallen hero's dependent is not burdened by higher education costs that could otherwise limit their future opportunities.

Throughout my career as a first responder, I served alongside men and women who put their lives on the line every day for our residents, including those who tragically lost their lives in the line of duty. While these public servants knowingly accept the risks inherent in their work, their families bear those risks as well. Providing in-state tuition benefits to the dependents of fallen public safety employees is a meaningful and tangible way for the State of Maryland to acknowledge that shared sacrifice.

SB 212 reflects Maryland's longstanding commitment to supporting public safety professionals and ensuring their families are not left behind. I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on this important legislation.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued leadership on issues affecting Maryland's students, families, and public servants. I respectfully urge you to look **favorably** on SB 212.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "AS", is written over a light blue circular background.

Adam Streight
Cecil County Executive

2026 SB0212 Testimony For 2026-01-28.pdf

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: FAV

Testimony For SB0212

Honorable Senators

Please enter a favorable report for SB0212.

I support exempting financially dependent children of State or local public safety employees who die as a result of or in the course of performance of duties from paying out-of-state or out-of-county tuition at a public institution of higher education in the State.

I believe helping the children of our fallen heroes is the least we can do to show our appreciation for their sacrifice.

So please enter a favorable report for SB0212.

Alan Lang
45 Marys Mount Road
Harwood, Maryland 20776
Legislative District 30B
410-336-9745
Alanlang1@verizon.net
January 26, 2026

Senate Bill 212 (2026) PFFMD Testimony - J. Buddle

Uploaded by: Jeffrey Buddle

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR SENATE BILL 212

*Higher Education — Nonresident Tuition — Exemption for Dependents of State or Local Public Safety Employees
(Maryland Fallen Heroes Tuition Benefits Act)*

Position: Favorable

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 212, the *Maryland Fallen Heroes Tuition Benefits Act*. I am submitting this testimony in support of this important legislation.

SB 212 would provide a tuition benefit for financially dependent children of State or local public safety employees who die as a result of, or in the course of, performing their duties by exempting those dependents from paying out-of-state or out-of-county tuition rates at Maryland public institutions of higher education.

This bill honors the extraordinary service and sacrifice of Maryland's public safety professionals — including law enforcement officers, firefighters, EMS personnel, correctional officers, and others — by extending meaningful support to their families in a tangible way. Educational costs are a significant burden for many families, and offering this exemption helps ensure that the children of those who gave their lives in service to our communities are not further disadvantaged.

While the fiscal note indicates that only a small number of students are expected to qualify under the provisions of this bill, the impact for those individuals and their families is profound. The measure demonstrates Maryland's respect and gratitude for the ultimate sacrifice made by these public servants and aligns with long-standing state traditions of supporting survivors of fallen heroes.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 212.

Thank you for your consideration.

Submitted respectfully,

Jeffrey Buddle, President
Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland
International Association of Fire Fighters, Local A-19, AFL-CIO

The membership of the Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland includes 23 IAFF local affiliates from the following jurisdictions:

Federal: 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, Worcester County

SB 212_Support_IAFF Local 3666 .pdf

Uploaded by: Katie Nash

Position: FAV



Career Fire Fighters Association of Frederick County, MD Inc.
International Association of Fire Fighters Local 3666
Affiliated with:
Maryland State Professional Fire Fighters Association and The Central Maryland Labor Council / AFL-CIO



COMMENTS IN SUPPORT

SB 212: Higher Education - Nonresident Tuition - Exemption for Dependents of State or Local Public Safety Employees (Maryland Fallen Heroes Tuition Benefits Act)

Sponsored by: Senator Corderman

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Hearing 1/28 at 10:00 a.m.

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the President of the Career Firefighters Association of Frederick County, Maryland (IAFF Local 3666) – Frederick County’s public employee organization that represents the over 600 men and women employed with the Frederick County Division of Fire and Rescue. We are in support of SB 212 and I, as well as other organizations like mine, have submitted written testimony as well.

This legislation would offer a new death benefit for Maryland’s public safety professionals who perish in the line of duty.

Losing Battalion Chief Josh Laird in the line of duty was a devastating blow to our department, our community, and most importantly, his family. We have proudly supported Sara and the girls every step of the way and we view this as our next way we can look after them.

Josh gave his life protecting the people of Frederick County, embodying the bravery and selflessness that defines the fire service. His sacrifice should not be forgotten, and his family should not have to struggle for the support they deserve.

Josh’s children lost their father that day. While they may not reside in Maryland, their loss is no less significant, and their future should not be any less secure. The State of Maryland has long recognized the importance of honoring fallen first responders by providing in-state tuition benefits to their dependents. This should not be limited by geography—Josh laid down his life for this state, and Maryland should stand by his family in return.

Providing in-state tuition benefits to Josh’s children is not just an act of gratitude; it is a commitment to those who put their lives on the line for Marylanders every day. We urge our leaders to ensure that the families of our fallen heroes, regardless of where they live, are given every opportunity to succeed. Josh Laird gave everything for Maryland—it’s time for Maryland to give back to his family.

Letter of Support for SB0212.pdf

Uploaded by: Mike McKay

Position: FAV

MIKE MCKAY
Legislative District 1
Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties



Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 416
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410-841-3565
800-492-7122 Ext. 3565
Mike.McKay@senate.maryland.gov

Judicial Proceedings Committee
Executive Nominations Committee

Cumberland Office
100N Mechanic Street
Cumberland, Maryland 21502
240-362-7040

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Joint Committees
Administrative, Executive,
and Legislative Review
Children, Youth, and Families
Program Open Space and Agricultural
Land Preservation

Williamsport Office
2N Conococheque Street
Williamsport Town Hall
Williamsport, Maryland

January 20, 2026

RE: Fire/EMS Coalition Support for SB0212

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

The Fire/EMS Coalition would like to express their support for Senate Bill 0212: **Higher Education - Nonresident Tuition - Exemption for Dependents of State or Local Public Safety Employees (Maryland Fallen Heroes Tuition Benefits Act)**. This bill will exempt financially dependent children of State or local public safety employees who die as a result of or in the course of performance of duties from paying out-of-state or out-of-county tuition at a public institution of higher education in the State.

The Fire/EMS Coalition supports Senate Bill 0212.

Sincerely,

Senator Mike McKay
Representing the Appalachia Region of Maryland
Serving Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties

Voting Organizations:
Maryland Fire Chief's Association (MFCA)
Maryland State Firefighter's Association (MSFA)
State Fire Marshal (OSFM)
Maryland Fire Rescue Institute (MFRI)
Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services System (MIEMMS)
Metro Fire Chief's Association

SB 212 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Paul Corderman

Position: FAV

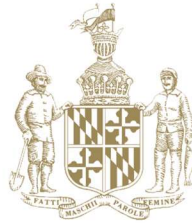
PAUL D. CORDERMAN
Legislative District 2
Frederick and Washington Counties

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Capital Budget

Education, Business and Administration



James Senate Office Building
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410-841-3903 • 301-858-3903
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 28, 2026

Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee
Chair Brian J. Feldman
Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Higher Education - Nonresident Tuition - Exemption for Dependents of State or Local Public Safety Employees (Maryland Fallen Heroes Tuition Benefits Act)

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present SB 212 today. SB 212 would extend in-state tuition benefits to the surviving dependents of public safety employees who died in the line of duty while serving Maryland state or local agencies covered under the Maryland Public Safety Article, regardless of the recipient's current state or county of residence.

Providing in-state tuition benefits to the surviving dependents of Public Service Officers ensures that their families are supported in achieving educational and economic stability after a tragic loss. It reinforces Maryland's commitment to honoring its fallen heroes and sustaining a culture of respect and gratitude for those who dedicate their lives to public service in the state of Maryland. Additionally, this is a low-cost benefit to offer for Maryland public safety employees.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill, and we respectfully request a favorable report on SB 212.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. D. Corderman".

Senator Paul D. Corderman – District 2, Washington & Frederick Counties

MCPA MSA SB212-in-state-county-tuition-public safe

Uploaded by: Samira Jackson

Position: FAV



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association

Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair and
Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Samira A. Jackson, Representative, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: January 28, 2026

RE: **SB 212: Higher Education - Nonresident Tuition - Exemption for Dependents of State or Local Public Safety Employees**

POSITION: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **SUPPORT** SB 212. This bill clarifies that a financially dependent child who may reside in another state or another county whose parent is a state or local public safety official who dies in the line of duty is exempt from paying the out-of-state or out-of-county tuition rate at a public institution of higher education in Maryland.

Public safety professionals dedicate their lives to protecting and serving the people of Maryland. Tragically, some of these brave individuals do not return home. Their families, already burdened with immeasurable loss, should not also face financial barriers to higher education.

SB 212 aligns with and builds upon similar legislation enacted across the country, including in Maryland where the dependents are residents. Children of law enforcement who do not live in the state of Maryland should be no exception. The legislation recognizes the sacrifices made and extends these benefits so that children of fallen heroes can pursue their academic and professional aspirations without undue financial burden.

For these reasons, the MCPA and MSA respectfully request a **favorable report** on SB 212.

SB212. MHEC. FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Sanjay Rai

Position: FAV



Governor

Wes Moore

Lt. Governor

Aruna Miller

Secretary

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.

Commission Chair

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz

Commission Vice Chair

Chike Aguh

Commissioners

Kathleen Bands, Ph.D.

Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.

Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.

Barbara Kerr Howe

Narcisa A. Polonio, Ed.D.

Rebecca Taber Staehelin

Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.

Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.

Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.

Sarah Otwey, Student
Commissioner

Principal Counsel

Kimberly Smith Ward

January 28, 2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair,
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) respectfully requests a favorable report of Senate Bill 212— the Maryland Fallen Heroes Tuition Benefits Act, sponsored by Senator Corderman. This legislation would exempt financially dependent children of certain State or local public safety employees who die as a result of or in the course of employment from paying out-of-state or out-of-county tuition at Maryland public institutions of higher education.

Senate Bill 212 honors the courage and sacrifice of public safety personnel, including law enforcement officers, firefighters, corrections officers, emergency medical services personnel, and others, by ensuring that the dependents of those who make the ultimate sacrifice have expanded access to affordable higher education. Access to higher education can be life-altering for a student and provides long-term economic mobility. This bill aligns with Maryland's longstanding commitment to supporting families of public servants and acknowledges the profound service these individuals provide to our communities.

By exempting dependent children from out-of-state or out-of-county tuition, SB 212 would reduce financial barriers and extend meaningful tuition equity for these students. This exemption complements existing State tuition benefit programs and reflects Maryland's values of fairness and recognition of service.

MHEC supports the intent of Senate Bill 212 and is committed to working collaboratively with public institutions of higher education. MHEC wants to highlight that this legislation would require institutions to support the effective and timely implementation of the tuition benefit. To support smooth administration, MHEC notes that institutions, in collaboration with MHEC, would need to:

- Update residency and tuition classification processes so eligible students are clearly identified, and the exemption is applied consistently and accurately; and

MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

217 East Redwood Street • Suite 2100 • Baltimore, MD 21202

T 410.767.3300 • 800.974.0203 • F 410.332.0270 • TTY for the Deaf 800.735.2258 www.mhec.maryland.gov

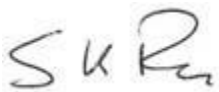
- Align systems and operational workflows to reflect the new eligibility category, ensuring proper coding, reporting, and transparency.

MHEC views these steps as part of its ongoing coordination with institutions to improve clarity, consistency, and student experience. These considerations are offered to support smooth administration of the benefit and to ensure that eligible students receive the full intended value of the exemption in a timely manner.

Senate Bill 212 represents a meaningful step toward expanding educational access while honoring the legacy of Maryland's public safety professionals, and it is not anticipated to have a fiscal impact.

For these reasons, the Maryland Higher Education Commission respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 212. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Meghan Music, Executive Director of External and Legislative Relations.

Yours in Service,

Handwritten signature of Sanjay Rai in blue ink.

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.
Secretary
Maryland Higher Education Commission

laird2026sb212.pdf

Uploaded by: Sara Laird

Position: FAV

January 26, 2026

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee, Maryland General Assembly
11 Bladen St.
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB212 - Higher Education - Nonresident Tuition - Exemption for Dependents of State or Local Public Safety Employees (Maryland Fallen Heroes Tuition Benefits Act)

Dear Senator Feldman and Senator Kagan,

My husband, Battalion Chief Josh Laird, served the citizens of Frederick County, Maryland, for 21 years. He was killed in the line of duty on August 11, 2021, while fighting a house fire in Ijamsville, Maryland.

In the days and weeks following his death, I met with representatives from Frederick County Government, the Frederick County Department of Fire and Rescue Services, IAFF Local 3666, and the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation to discuss survivor benefits. During those conversations, I was informed that my children would be eligible to attend any Maryland public institution of higher education tuition-free.

At that time, college tuition was not an immediate concern. My oldest daughter had just begun high school, and I had been employed at Mount Saint Mary's University for 18 years. As a result, I was at the top of the seniority list for the tuition exchange program, and as an employee, my children were also eligible to attend Mount Saint Mary's University at no cost. However, a few months after returning to my role as Chief Technology Officer, I was forced to make the difficult decision to step down from my full-time position. As a grieving widow and single mother raising two grieving children, I could no longer maintain the demands of that role. I remained employed part-time for the next fourteen months, after which I was laid off.

Several months later, I began researching the Maryland Line of Duty Death tuition benefit and learned that the program is formally known as the Edward T. Conroy Memorial Scholarship, administered by the Maryland Higher Education Commission. Based on my review of the eligibility criteria, I believed my children qualified, and I felt reassured that their college education was secure.

Some time later, I spoke with Jessica Portz, the widow of Officer Thomas Portz Jr., who was killed in the line of duty while serving with the Baltimore City Police Department in 2010. Jessica and I share another important commonality: we were both residents of Pennsylvania at the time of our husbands' deaths.

Jessica had the same understanding that I did—that her children would receive free tuition at Maryland public institutions of higher education. However, in early 2020, after her oldest daughter was accepted to Towson University, she was informed that her daughter was ineligible for the Conroy Scholarship due to out-of-state residency. In response, the Fraternal Order of Police acted quickly, and on March 18, 2020, House Bill 596 was passed, expanding eligibility to include surviving spouses and children of Maryland public safety employees killed in the line of duty or rendered 100 percent disabled, regardless of residency.

Unfortunately, eligibility alone does not resolve the issue. The Conroy Scholarship includes limitations on the maximum award amount and its allowable use. As a result, the scholarship is effectively unusable for many out-of-state families. For the 2025–2026 academic year, in-state tuition at the University of Maryland is \$12,008, while out-of-state tuition is \$41,974. This leaves an out-of-pocket tuition gap of \$29,966, in addition to approximately \$16,476 for room and board. Furthermore, the Conroy Scholarship is reduced if a student receives other tuition-based scholarships, further limiting its effectiveness.

Because of these constraints, Jessica was forced to seek alternative funding sources for her daughter's education. This past August, my oldest daughter began her freshman year of college and is receiving the Conroy Scholarship; however, we continue to face a substantial funding gap. Passage of SB212 would have a meaningful impact on my younger daughter and on Jessica's son, and it would prevent future surviving families from encountering this same barrier.

While line-of-duty deaths among public safety employees are thankfully rare, many Maryland public safety professionals reside in neighboring states due to the high cost of living. For example, 34 percent of firefighters employed by the Frederick County Department of Fire and Rescue Services live out of state. Pennsylvania offers a comparable benefit that covers 100 percent of tuition, room, and board at state institutions of higher education. Unfortunately, my children are not eligible for that program because Pennsylvania does not recognize my husband's death, as he died while working for a Maryland department.

I believe this coverage gap was unintentional and represents an unfortunate oversight. Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully request a favorable report from the Environment and Transportation Committee on SB212.

Sincerely,

Sara Laird

Sara Laird
Widow of Battalion Chief Joshua Laird

SB0212_MACC_FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Drew Jabin

Position: FWA

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
January 28, 2026

**SB 212 - Higher Education - Nonresident Tuition - Exemption for Dependents of State or
Local Public Safety Employees (Maryland Fallen Heroes Tuition Benefits Act)**

Position: Favorable with Amendments

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, supports **SB 212** with amendments. MACC strongly supports the goal of this legislation to ensure that the dependent children of State and local public safety employees who lose their lives in the line of duty are able to pursue higher education without facing financial barriers based on residency status, and views this as an important way for the State to honor the sacrifice of these families.

Maryland's community colleges serve many students from families who have dedicated their lives to public service, and MACC fully agrees that these students should receive meaningful and reliable educational support. Ensuring access to affordable higher education for the children of fallen public safety employees promotes equity, educational attainment, and long-term economic stability for families who have already borne an extraordinary loss.

While MACC is strongly supportive of the intent of SB 212, we respectfully recommend that this benefit be implemented through the existing Edward T. and Mary A. Conroy Memorial Scholarship Program rather than as a separate tuition exemption. The Conroy Scholarship Program was specifically designed to serve the families of fallen public safety and military personnel and provides a well-established, equitable, and transparent framework for delivering educational benefits, while also promoting clarity for families and simplifying administration for institutions and the State.

Accordingly, MACC urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on **SB 212** with **AMENDMENTS** to incorporate this benefit into the Edward T. and Mary A. Conroy Memorial Scholarship Program. MACC appreciates the sponsor's leadership on this important issue and looks forward to working collaboratively to ensure this benefit is delivered in the most effective and sustainable way possible.

Please contact Brad Phillips (bphillips@mdacc.org) or Drew Jabin (djabin@mdacc.org) with questions.