

**To:** Chairman Marc Korman &  
Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,  
251 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**From:** Thomas Skinner, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland

**Subject:** SUPPORT for HB 204 – Water System Regulation and Legionnaires’ Disease Prevention

**To the Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee,**

On behalf of the Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland, representing over 10,000 active and retired Fire Fighters and EMS personnel, I am writing to express our support for **HB 204**. This legislation provides critical protections against Legionnaires’ disease and other waterborne pathogens—a threat that directly impacts the health of our first responders and the safety of the communities we are sworn to protect.

**Protecting Those Who Protect Maryland**

Firefighters are uniquely vulnerable to the risks addressed by this bill. Our personnel live and work in communal fire stations where water system disruptions or stagnant lines can create breeding grounds for *Legionella* bacteria. Furthermore, our members are frequently exposed to aerosolized water during fire suppression activities and training.

By requiring public water systems to maintain disinfectant residuals and implement best management practices, HB 204 ensures that the water in our stations—and our hydrants—is not a hidden hazard to our crews.

**Preserving Department Readiness**

Legionnaires’ disease is a severe, often fatal form of pneumonia. An outbreak within a fire department could:

**Sidelined Personnel:** Critical staff could be hospitalized, leading to dangerous staffing shortages.

**Strain EMS Resources:** As seen recently in state buildings and courthouses across Maryland, *Legionella* is a recurring threat. Increased outbreaks lead to surges in high-acuity EMS calls, straining an already taxed emergency medical system.

## **A Proactive Approach to Public Safety**

HB 204 aligns with the fire service mission of "Prevention First." The bill's requirements for **ASHRAE Standard 188** compliance in large facilities and the creation of an **MDE public dashboard** for water disruptions give us the data and the standards needed to mitigate risks before they become emergencies.

## **Conclusion**

We have seen *Legionella* detected in the Baltimore City District Courthouses, Spring Grove Hospital, and correctional facilities. These are the very environments our members enter daily. We cannot afford to wait for a major outbreak to implement these common-sense regulations.

We respectfully urge a **favorable report** on HB 204.

Sincerely,

Thomas Skinner  
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