



METROPOLITAN FIRE CHIEFS COUNCIL OF MARYLAND

February 16, 2026

Honorable Members of the Finance Committee,

The Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Council of Maryland is respectfully submitting this letter, in order to provide written testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 0445 (cross-filed with House Bill 0532), Employment Standards - Firefighters - Payment of Wages and Payroll Information.

SB 0445 would impose uniform statewide employment standards on counties and jurisdictions, including a specific method of computing overtime and mandated payroll reporting formats. This approach contradicts local collective bargaining authority that has been exercised between individual jurisdictions and their bargaining units for years. Local governments and professional firefighter members have developed work schedules, pay practices, and overtime calculations tailored to local needs. By mandating a single statewide standard, the bill risks negating locally negotiated agreements. It is the Metro Chiefs Council's belief that pay, staffing and work schedules should remain within the collective bargaining realm, working with management and organized labor to best meet the needs of the communities served.

Imposing a uniform an overtime threshold could result in significant unbudgeted costs for counties and jurisdictions. Past similar proposals were estimated to cost some local governments millions of dollars annually and should be considered an unfunded mandate. Local government budgets are already tightly constrained by rising operational costs, healthcare premiums, and infrastructure needs. Mandating a costly pay standard without dedicated funding will strain local budgets.

Fire departments operate under varying staffing models, based on call volume, and labor supply conditions across Maryland. Some jurisdictions incorporate volunteers alongside career staff; others have adopted alternative scheduling systems based on risk and needs of differing communities. We believe it should be left to local counties and jurisdictions to best determine staffing and pay schedules based on what is best for communities served.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report for SB 0445.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gordon Wallace
Legislative Subcommittee Chair
Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Council of MD