



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

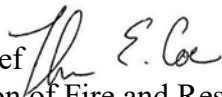
DIVISION OF FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES

Office of the Chief

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

Thomas E. Coe, Chief

HB 532 - Employment Standards – Firefighters – Payment of Wages and Payroll Information

DATE: February 17, 2026
COMMITTEE: House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
POSITION: Unfavorable
TESTIMONY FROM: Thomas E. Coe, Fire Chief 
Frederick County Division of Fire and Rescue Services

I write today as the Fire Chief of Frederick County to share my concerns regarding HB 532 – Employment Standards – Firefighters – Payment of Wages and Payroll Information.

Today in Frederick County our Firefighters and Emergency Medical Clinicians assigned to Fire Stations work an average 48-hour work week that involves a rotating schedule of 24 hours on and 48 hours off with a 5 day break every three weeks. HB532 would move our Firefighters and EMS personnel to a 42-hour workweek.

There are two ways to accomplish the requirements set forth in HB532. Fire Departments can pay overtime to employees when they work in excess of 42 hours, or they could move to a different shift configuration to accomplish the new work week requirement. In Frederick County, the overtime option equates to at least \$4 million dollars in increased personnel costs, while reconfiguration to a 4-shift deployment would require the hiring of 151 firefighters, cost at least \$17 million dollars to fund and take no less than 3 years to implement.

Frederick County is committed to the health and safety of our first responders and has invested in our responder's wellbeing and worked diligently to move to meet national staffing standards. The passage of HB532 and the associated financial costs will significantly delay the implementation of the national standard of 4 person staffing and other critical staffing initiatives in our rapidly growing county thus reducing safety for our firefighters and the public they serve.

This legislation, as proposed, could have severe unintended consequences. Every Fire Departments in Maryland has a limited number of specialized positions. Those positions include but are not limited to paramedics, technical rescue specialists, hazardous materials technicians and apparatus operators. Many departments, Frederick County included, do not have the number of specialized positions to move from a 3-shift deployment to a 4-shift deployment, meaning that this legislation could have true negative

impact on available staffed apparatus or result in frequent mandatory holdovers just to maintain minimum staffing levels.

Frederick County Government has worked hard to establish and maintain a positive working relationship with our IAFF Local 3666. Conversations regarding shift schedules and overtime pay should remain topics for the collective bargaining process between local governments and the International Association of Firefighters.

For all the reasons above, I respectfully request that the committee provide an **UNFAVORABLE** report on House Bill 532.