



## House Bill 1248

### *Workers' Compensation – Average Weekly Wage – Volunteer Company Member*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Economic Matters Committee

Date: March 1, 2013

From: Leslie Knapp Jr.

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 1248. The bill would alter the method of computing the average weekly wage of a volunteer firefighter for the purpose of determining workers' compensation benefits.

Under current law, a volunteer firefighter's average weekly wage is determined as either the salary the volunteer earns from other employment or, if the volunteer has no other employment, either from the state average weekly wage (currently \$990) or the volunteer's salary from prior employment.

HB 1248 would require that a volunteer firefighter's average weekly wage be the *greater of*: (1) the salary the volunteer earns from other employment; or (2) the equivalent to the base salary or wages of a professional firefighter or emergency medical technician in the jurisdiction where the accidental personal injury or last injurious exposure occurred.

Both volunteer and professional firefighters play important but distinct public safety roles in Maryland. However, this bill would blur the distinction between the benefits that accrue to a full-time professional employee and a part-time volunteer.

The bill would also increase workers' compensation costs for local governments. Statewide, over 75% of all firefighters are volunteers.<sup>1</sup> Volunteers, by the nature of their job, typically either work in another job part-time or do not work at all. Under HB 1248, a volunteer would almost always be entitled to an average weekly wage calculation based on the professional firefighter salary. Baltimore County estimates that its base salary for a professional firefighter is \$1,400 per week.

HB 1248 would increase costs for local governments (particularly those that are self-insured). Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to give HB 1248 an **UNFAVORABLE** report.

<sup>1</sup> Legislative Handbook, Volume II, Department of Legislative Services, 2010