



Senate Bill 1013

Public Safety - Task Force on Volunteer Fire Companies and Rescue Squads

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: March 21, 2019

From: Robin Clark Eilenberg

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 1013. This bill establishes a statewide task force to examine staffing levels of Maryland's volunteer fire companies and rescue squads in the state.

Maryland's county elected officials have serious concerns regarding persistent staffing shortages in the volunteer fire service. This task force will review current recruitment practices, evaluate recruitment impediments, and study recruitment best practices in other states.

Maryland counties are committed to providing the best in firefighting and fire rescue. Lack of staffing at volunteer fire companies can delay fire response. Calls may be re-dispatched from station to station, as some companies 'scratch' and others scramble for available personnel.

The Maryland State Firefighters Association advises that there are 362 volunteer fire companies and approximately 28,000 volunteer firefighters in the state. According to the National Fire Department Registry from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, more than 60% of Maryland's firefighters are volunteers.

Every county in Maryland, except Baltimore City, is served by volunteer fire companies, though some have both career and volunteer companies. County governments are the primary funding source for fire and rescue services, supporting 84% of their total spending in fiscal year 2017, according to the Department of Legislative Services.

Volunteer fire companies are a critical element of statewide fire service and those companies rely on the availability of trained responders to execute timely and effective fire protection, rescue, and emergency response.

For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 1013 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.