

Testimony for Maryland

HOUSE BILL 1502

March 04, 2020

Vance Webster Jr.

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Parsonsburg, MD 21849

Good afternoon,

My name is Vance Webster, I am a lifelong Maryland resident, career Firefighter and Paramedic here in Anne Arundel County and the Deputy Fire Chief of the Parsonsburg Fire Company with over 23 years of service in the emergency services field. In 2014 I received my Maryland WEAR and CARRY PERMIT after receiving multiple threats from a regular 911 caller in our response area. This person was always under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol when we arrived and even though he called us for service a couple times a week he continuously threatened our well-being and, on some occasions, threatened to harm us the next time he saw us in public. My permit was denied for approximately 3 months until I could arrange for a police officer to be present and witness the threat first hand and document it to satisfy the troopers request. I was fortunate that an officer was willing to document this threat, at first, he thought I was joking because most of us see it as part of the job or a perceived risk. The facts are over 3,500 EMS providers were assaulted in 2017 according to the latest study done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and over 93% of all EMS responders report they have experienced verbal and physical violence during their career.

This type of occurrence is something we first responders encounter daily, and the threat does not leave or go away simply at the end of our tour of duty or when we take off our uniforms and go home to our families. Most of us live in the same communities we serve- just a trip to the pharmacy for my son may include running into the drug overdose patient that I reversed their high and tossed their last bag of heroin, the patient I chemically restrained and forced them to go to the hospital for a mental evaluation against their will, the distraught son that feels I did not help save his father. I can attest that in all these instances my safety and well-being has been threatened over a 23-year period but only a few times did it happen to occur in front of a police officer, and that was only after I requested an officer to the scene to specifically document the threats. You trust us with your lives,

your children's lives, all we are asking is that you support us in this effort and allow us to protect ourselves and our families.

If you as a delegate or state representative applied today for a Maryland Wear and Carry permit it would be fast tracked and approved in less than a month as long as you are not a prohibited person. This decision is based on your assumed risk as a law maker and representative. I can only testify on my experiences, but this bill covers members of our communities with vastly similar responsibilities' and perceived risks. I thank you for your time ask for a favorable report on this bill.

Respectfully,

Vance Webster Jr.
Deputy Fire Chief | Paramedic
Parsonsborg Fire Company, INC.