

MARYLAND STATE FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Representing the Volunteer Fire, Rescue and Emergency Medical Services Personnel



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March 9, 2020

My name is Kate Tomanelli and I am the Executive Director for the Maryland State Firemen's Association (MSFA), and I am also a volunteer emergency medical technician in Queen Anne's County. I am writing in OPPOSITION of House Bill 1470.

The MSFA is a statewide organization representing over 25,000 volunteer fire, rescue, emergency medical technicians, and paramedics and 363 member companies.

There are several reasons behind the MSFA's opposition to this bill. One is that the MSFA and its fire service members already rely on the Maryland Institute of Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS) and the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute (MFRI) to design and implement mental health awareness and education for our volunteer personnel. We are not under the jurisdiction of the Police Training Commission for the training of our volunteers.

We also feel that this bill could be confusing mental health training with mental health sensitivity or awareness. **For emergency calls concerning a mental health issue, police are dispatched to the scene first and EMS is staged away from the scene until it is deemed safe.** When EMS personnel enter the scene, it is not to identify which mental illness they may have or to diagnose and treat said illness. EMS personnel are simply there to access the patient, handle any life threats, and transport to the nearest facility. Anything more than that is above and beyond the scope of practice for EMT's and Paramedics in the State of Maryland.

In addition, as stated in MIEMSS' testimony, specific to EMS personnel, the EMS providers in Maryland already receive initial and continuing education mental health awareness that has been approved by the State EMS Board. This training is

in the initial EMT training curriculum and classes are offered throughout the year. Some of these classes are being held this June at the MSFA Ocean City Convention and Conference and they include PTSD resilience, Autism for First Responders, and Emergency Response to Suicide.

We believe that this bill is well-intended but may be misplaced by including EMS personnel. Therefore, the MSFA is asking for an unfavorable report for House Bill 1470.

Respectfully,
Kate Tomanelli
Executive Director, MSFA