



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)

To the House Economic Matters and Environment and Transportation Committee

Chairs: Delegate C. T. Wilson and Delegate Marc Korman

February 27, 2024

House Bill 0468: Commission to Advance Lithium–Ion Battery Safety in Maryland

POSITION: SUPPORT

Economic Matters Chair Wilson, Economic Matters Vice Chair Crosby, Environment and Transportation Chair Korman, Environment and Transportation Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 0468 Commission to Advance Lithium–Ion Battery Safety in Maryland

Lithium-ion batteries have become a prominent part of our society. Sales of electrical vehicles powered by lithium-ion batteries in Maryland have risen 23% between 2022 and 2023, and it is predicted that sales continue to rise over the course of 2024 (Devereux, 2023). Lithium-ion batteries can power objects that range from toothbrushes to cars and have proven to be beneficial in various ways. Providing long-lasting, high quality, and low maintenance energy, lithium-ion batteries are considered to be eco-friendly and convenient. In addition to the advantages lithium-ion batteries possess, they also carry grave disadvantages. In 2023, there were nearly 40 reported incidents of lithium-ion battery fires which resulted in 10 injuries. 18 incidents were due to battery failures and 24 took place in or near a residential dwelling (Maryland Office of the State Fire Marshal, n.d.). Causes of the fires range from design and manufacture issues to electrical overcharge, and many people are unaware of such hazards. If the batteries are mishandled or are improperly disposed of, it poses an immediate risk to public safety. Similar incidents have been seen in New York City (NYC) but on a much larger scale. In 2021, there were over 100 fires reported resulting in 79 injuries and 4 deaths (Fire Safety Research Institute, 2022). Contributing causes in New York also revolved around the mishandling, storage, and disposal of batteries. In the search for ways to keep NYC residents safe, The Fire Department of the City of New York has collaborated with the Fire Safety Research Institute to conduct research on best practices to handle lithium-ion batteries and how to best disseminate the information to the public. To prevent further fires and injury in Maryland, it is imperative that the state moves forward with establishing a commission to study best practices and regulations of lithium-ion batteries while remaining as safe as possible. Established regulations will not only keep the public safe, but also first responders. Lithium-ion batteries may seem to be the best option, but Maryland residents need to be made aware of the risks the batteries pose and how it could impact their life. With this in mind, the Maryland Rural Health Association strongly supports HB0468: Commission to Advance Lithium–Ion Battery Safety in Maryland.

*On behalf of the Maryland Rural Health Association,
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Devereux, M. (2022). *Number of electric vehicles continues to grow in Maryland*. Maryland Department of Transportation. <https://news.mdot.maryland.gov/number-of-electric-vehicles-continues-to-grow-in-maryland/>

Fire Safety Research Institute. (2022). *Examining the fire safety hazards of lithium-ion battery powered e-mobility devices in homes*. <https://fsri.org/research/examining-fire-safety-hazards-lithium-ion-battery-powered-e-mobility-devices-homes>

Maryland Office of the State Fire Marshal. (n.d.). *Lithium-ion battery fire reporting*. <https://mdosfm.wixsite.com/blog/lithiumionfires>