

MARYLAND STATE FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Representing the Volunteer Fire, Rescue and Emergency Medical Services Personnel



Joel C. McCrea

Past President 2021 - 2022

17 State Circle

Annapolis, MD 21401

(O) 443-974-2222

(C) 410-592-7759

Email: JMcCrea@msfa.org

Judicial Proceedings Committee
Senator William C. Smith, Jr.; Chair
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher; Vice Chair
East Miller Senate Building
Room 2
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 28, 2024

Greetings from the Maryland State Firemen's Association ("MSFA"). As a Past President and current member of the MSFA Legislative Committee, I am pleased to offer my testimony in support of Senate Bill 838. The safety of our 1st responders is a top priority and the proposed changes provided by this bill will provide for the safety of our volunteers by allowing them to be more visible as they perform their duties.

The MSFA represents over 350 volunteer fire, EMS, and rescue companies with about 28,000 members in the State of Maryland. These men and women that volunteer at the fire, EMS, and rescue companies provide a vital service to their communities. They are called upon at all hours of the day and night to respond to the emergencies and needs of others.

Currently, each volunteer fire company can have up to five of their officers display red lights on their private vehicles while on route to or at the scene of an emergency. SB 838 will allow red, or **red and white** lights for the company officers. Contrasting lights have been proven to be more visible and are consistent with the lights used on fire and EMS response vehicles.

Many communities in the State rely on volunteers to respond to fire, EMS and rescue emergencies. A number of these communities have volunteer fire police that respond in their own private vehicles to help direct traffic at the scene of an emergency. Fire police are currently allowed to have red lights displayed on their vehicles while at the scene. HB0782 would allow the fire police to have red, **red and green**, or **red and white** to help make them more visible while at the scene of an emergency.

Not all communities utilize fire police, but for those communities that do, the fire police provide a vital service at the scene of an emergency to help drivers navigate around the incident and to protect the 1st responders at the scene. The current red lights alone may not have the contrast or visibility to alert drives of the presence of the fire police. Studies have shown that contrasting lights, particularly the use of green lights, have been shown to be effective. Studies suggest that humans can differentiate more shades of green than any other color. Green lights have a longer wavelength than other colors, allowing them to penetrate through fog and other weather conditions more effectively, which enhances their visibility.

The State of Maryland has recognized the effectiveness of green lights and have added the use of green lights, along with amber lights, to highway maintenance and service equipment. In addition to Maryland, the states of Michigan, Texas, Missouri, and Wisconsin have added green lights to their state highway equipment.

Responding to incidents on the highways is inherently dangerous. Nationwide, 45 responders were struck and killed in 2023, and 10 responders have been struck and killed to date in 2024.

In summary, the use of **red and green**, or **red and white** lights will help improve visibility and can enhance roadway safety at emergency scenes. Further, the lights can help differentiate between fire police and law enforcement vehicles.

We respectfully request a favorable vote on SB 838.

Respectfully submitted,

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