

August 26, 2020

Governor Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.
Treasurer Nancy K. Kopp
Comptroller Peter Franchot
Board of Public Works
80 Calvert Street, Room 117
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Maryland State Police Aviation Command (MSPAC) Budget Reductions

Dear Honorable Members,

This letter is respectfully submitted by the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association, Maryland State Fireman's Association, Metro Fire Chiefs Association and the Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland.

On July 1, 2020 the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) recommended an agenda item as part of the FY' 21 Budget Reduction Plan that proposed to incorporate the sale of one MSPAC helicopter and the closure of one MSPAC section base. This item was subsequently approved by the Board of Public Works at the same meeting.

It is important to remember that 80% of the MSPAC budget is funded through the Maryland EMS Operations Fund (MEMSOF). The MEMSOF is funded from a \$14.50 a year vehicle registration fee surcharge, a moving violation surcharge of \$7.50 added to certain traffic cases, and the interest earned on the fund. The citizens across the State of Maryland pay this surcharge to ensure a dedicated funding source for the major components of the Maryland EMS system which includes the MSPAC.

The MSPAC helicopters are a critical component of the Maryland EMS Trauma System. The 10 helicopters assigned to the seven MSPAC base sections are necessary in order to provide the resources necessary to maintain 24/7/365 coverage and availability across the State of Maryland. These helicopters ensure that critically injured trauma patients can be transported to a Level 1 trauma center within the "golden hour" of trauma care. Patients that can be delivered within this critical time frame have vastly improved chances of survival and favorable outcomes.

In addition to transporting trauma patients, MSPAC helicopters also transport critically injured or ill patients to other definitive care specialty centers and perform various inter-hospital transfers throughout the State. MSPAC are also responsible for provide services with high angle rescues and water rescues along many other aerial based specialized rescue services. The United States Coast Guard transfers nearly all of their helicopter-based rescue calls to the MSPAC due to the far distance of the nearest Coast Guard aviation rescue helicopters in Atlantic City, NJ and Elizabeth City, NC. The fundamental principle behind the current structure of the MSPAC is that all Maryland residents have the right to equal access to publicly funded aviation helicopter services. These wide-ranging rescue services that the MSPAC provides to the citizens of the State of Maryland is invaluable and irreplaceable.

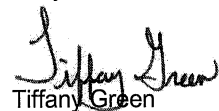
Our organizations are adamantly opposed to any budget reductions in the MSPAC that will result in the sale of a helicopter and/or closure of a MSPAC section base. Moving forward with any of these reductions will result in significantly decreased levels of service provided not only to the citizens of Maryland, but to the Maryland fire, rescue and emergency medical services systems. It is hard to imagine what community is going to lose this vital service while still being required to pay the various surcharges that fund the system.

We respectfully request that the Board of Public Works reconsider this budget reduction through the appropriate process at its next meeting and restore any and all funding to maintain the MSPAC in its current form and structure.

Respectfully submitted,



Charles W. Walker
President
Maryland State Fireman's Association



Tiffany Green
Chair
Metro Fire Chiefs Association



Paul E. Sullivan, Jr.
President
Maryland Fire Chiefs Association



Jeffrey Buddle
President
Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland

cc: Bill Ferguson, Maryland State Senate, President
Adrienne Jones, Speaker of the House