



**HOWARD COUNTY PROFESSIONAL  
FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION  
I.A.F.F. LOCAL 2000**

5397 TWIN KNOLLS ROAD • SUITE 16 • COLUMBIA, MD 21045

July 18, 2017

Chairman Jon Weinstein  
Howard County Council  
3430 Court House Drive  
Ellicott City, MD 21042

I respectfully submit the following testimony in support of Council Bill 56-2017.

As you know being a police officer or fire fighter is a dangerous occupation. When one enters a public safety profession, we accept the dangers; and while it isn't often spoken of, we understand that we may be called upon to lay down our life for another.

Our families come along on the emotional ride that is our careers. When we have a great day, and save a patient's life, our spouses often share in our success. When we have a rough day, and see tragedy unfold before us, our spouses often console us. When that tragedy comes in the form of the death of a co-worker, it is our spouses who come with us to the viewings and funerals, and live the loss with us.

It is when that death has occurred in the Line of Duty that speaks to the nature of Council Bill 56. It is clear that public safety departments take it extremely hard when there is the loss of one of their own. This is evidenced by the incredible displays of comradery during Line of Duty Death funerals for police officers and fire fighters. The department suffering the loss vows to support the surviving spouse, and to forever make them feel like a part of the department family. In my experience, the public safety departments I have experience with do this well. But it is the surviving family, and in particular the surviving spouse, who suffers the real loss. They live the rest of their lives with that loss; the loss of companionship, shared dreams, financial stability, and friendship. It is further devastating when the death leaves children behind; without the second parent to share in the joys and responsibilities of parenthood.

The loss is a loss for life. The police officer or fire fighter has made the ultimate sacrifice in service to others and has now left a spouse, and possibly children, behind. The loss does not end, nor does it lessen with time, even if the surviving spouse remarries at some point in the future. It is our opinion that we have an obligation to take care of the surviving spouse; not only through the brotherhood and sisterhood of the police and fire services, but by ensuring their ability to support themselves financially.

Fortunately, fire and rescue has not had to contemplate such a tragedy and whether the survivor would someday need to decide between moving forward in life or losing the benefit from their tragic loss. Still, as the Local 2000 trustee of the Police/Fire Pension Committee, and

on behalf of Local 2000's leadership team, we are unanimous in our belief that should this circumstance ever become a reality for our department, the benefit should continue after remarriage. It is simply the right thing to do in honoring the sacrifice that one of us may someday be called upon to make.

As a trustee of the Police/Fire Pension Committee, and on behalf of the nearly 400 members of IAFF Local 2000, I respectfully request a favorable vote on Council Bill 56.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard L. Ruehl". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R" at the beginning.

Richard L. Ruehl

President, IAFF Local 2000

Trustee, Police/Fire Pension Committee

## Sayers, Margery

---

**From:** Richard L. Ruehl <RRuehl@IAFFLocal2000.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 18, 2017 3:11 PM  
**To:** CouncilMail  
**Subject:** Testimony - CB 56-2017  
**Attachments:** CB 56 - 2017 - Spousal Benefits - July 18, 2017.docx

Council members, attached is my testimony on Council Bill 56-2017. Should you have any questions, please let me know.

Thank you! Rich

**Richard L. Ruehl, President**

Howard County Professional Fire Fighters Association  
IAFF Local 2000  
5397 Twin Knolls Road  
Suite 16  
Columbia, MD 21045  
(M) (443) 250-6961  
(O) (410) 730-2000  
[RRuehl@IAFFLocal2000.org](mailto:RRuehl@IAFFLocal2000.org)  
[www.IAFFLocal2000.org](http://www.IAFFLocal2000.org)