

Agreement

Between Local 4658, International Association of Fire
Fighters, AFL-CIO and Charles County, Maryland

July 1, 2025- June 30, 2029



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PREAMBLE

This Collective Bargaining Agreement is entered into by Charles County, Maryland (hereinafter referred to as "Employer" or "County"), and Local 4658 of the International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO (hereinafter referred to as "Union"), and has as its purpose the promotion of harmonious relations between the County and the Union; the establishment of an equitable and peaceful procedure for the resolution of differences; and includes the agreement of the parties on compensation (excluding those non-retirement benefits determined, offered, administered, controlled or managed by the County Commissioners of Charles County), retirement benefits, leave, holidays, vacations, working conditions and job security for the employees covered hereunder.

ARTICLE 1 – RECOGNITION

The Employer hereby recognizes the Union as the exclusive representative for the purpose of collective bargaining for all full-time merit system employees of the Department of Emergency Services (hereafter DES) in the rank of Lieutenant and below.

In Fiscal Year 2026, the ranks within the bargaining unit are:

- Emergency Medical Technician I
- Emergency Medical Technician II
- Paramedic
- EMS Lieutenant
- HAZMAT Technician
- MIH Supervisor

In the event that the County establishes an Emergency Medical Technician, Paramedic II position during the term of this Agreement, the EMS Lieutenant position will move up to the next grade on the applicable scale.

The County and the Union shall not discriminate against any employee regardless of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religious or political affiliation or opinion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity or expression, or any other status protected by law.

Upon hiring employees, the Union shall be provided a reasonable opportunity to meet with all new employees.

ARTICLE 2 – ORGANIZATIONAL SECURITY

Section 2.1 Union Membership

All employees covered by this Agreement who are members of the Union or who elect to become members of the Union shall, pursuant to Section 2.2, remain members of the Union for the duration of this Agreement, except to the extent this requirement may violate applicable federal, state, or local law. The Employer shall not discriminate in any way against employees as a result of the employee's participation in union-related activities.

Section 2.2 Checkoff

- A. Upon presentation by the Union of a list of the individual employees covered by this Agreement for each of whom the Union certifies to have on file a written authorization for dues deduction duly executed by the employee, and upon receipt by the County Division of Payroll of an authorization to make such deduction signed by the employee, the Union shall be entitled to have each such employee's membership dues deducted from their paychecks on a biweekly basis. The amount of the dues deducted will remain the same until the Union certifies to the County, in writing, over the signature of an authorized officer of the Union, that such fees have been lawfully changed and what the new deduction will be each pay period. The County shall be notified at least one month in advance of the effective date of such a change.
- B. The amounts to be deducted shall be certified to the County by the Treasurer of the Union, and the aggregate deductions of all employees shall be remitted monthly to the Union along with an itemized statement.
- C. The Union agrees to hold harmless and indemnify the County for any liability arising from the application of this Article.
- D. Except as otherwise expressly provided in this contract, the Employer will not seek to encourage or discourage Union membership.

Section 2.3 Leave for Union Business

- A. The Union and members of the bargaining unit shall be permitted reasonable time during working hours to conduct Union business. However, the County's operational needs will take precedent over Union business and the Union and members of the bargaining unit may be precluded from conducting Union business during working hours when necessary. In such case, the Union and members of the bargaining unit may select a designee to conduct Union business. Any leave taken for Union business while on a scheduled shift will be treated as hours worked for purposes of determining overtime eligibility. Union business conducted outside of a scheduled shift will not be treated as hours worked. DES reserves the right to preclude any and all Union business during working hours when there is an emergency and at other times when it shall negatively impact agency operations. The Union members and members of the bargaining unit shall not be penalized in performance evaluation or in eligibility for promotion for conducting Union business during working hours consistent with this provision. However, the members of the bargaining unit are expected to complete their assigned duties in a satisfactory manner.
- B. The Union and the Employer agree that leave for Union business does not include attendance at any meeting or program (such as Union training or conferences) not required by the Employer. Leave taken by an employee for a meeting or program that does not qualify as leave for Union business shall not count towards the employee's annual leave cap. The Employer agrees that a request for leave to attend a Union meeting or program not required by the Employer shall not be unreasonably denied without an operational justification.
- C. The County shall provide a cumulative total of two hundred (200) hours of paid Union Leave per calendar year which may be used by employees selected by the Union to attend to Union business

conducted outside of an employee's scheduled shift. One hundred (100) hours of Union Leave are reserved exclusively for use by the Union President. The remaining one hundred (100) hours may be allocated by the Union President to other Union officers. Union Leave may not be used for attendance at any meeting or program (such as Union training or conferences) not required by the Employer. DES may preclude the use of Union Leave when there is an emergency and at other times when it shall negatively impact agency operations. Unused Union Leave may not be carried over from one year to another.

Section 2.4 Communication Distribution

Provided always that the distribution needs of the Department be paramount, the Union will be permitted to use the County's electronic mail and inter-office mail for distribution of official Union communications, all of which will be subject to the County's IT Policies and Procedures.

Section 2.5 Uniforms and Union Insignia

The Employer shall provide all uniforms required to be worn and equipment to be used by employees. Employees shall be allowed to wear a pin, a patch/embroidery, and/or a t-shirt showing their affiliation with the Union and/or International Association of Fire Fighters on official Department uniforms, subject to the Department of Emergency Services approval.

Section 2.6 Non-participation in Volunteer Activities

- A. Employees will be prohibited from performing firefighting or rescue, and/or emergency medical services within Charles County at a rank or in a position above that which they hold with the Employer.
- B. No career employee shall be required to participate in fund raising activities of a volunteer fire department, EMS Station, or corporation.

Section 2.7 Roster

A roster of all members of the units represented by the Union shall be compiled by the County showing each member's name, rank, rate of pay, and his/her length of service with the Department. The Department will provide this roster to the Union upon request.

Section 2.8 Labor-Management Committee

There shall be a labor-management committee consisting of three (3) Union representatives and three (3) Employer representatives. The Committee shall meet at request of either party, and at least once a quarter to discuss all matters of mutual concern. The Committee shall have the authority to make recommendations to the Union and the Employer.

Section 2.9 Committee Membership

The Union shall have the option to have one employee representative on all EMS Departmental employee/employer committees to represent the interests of the Union. This representative shall be selected by a vote of the Union membership.

Section 2.10 Publication of Agreement

The County agrees to provide an electronic copy of the contract to the Union and to make the contract available on the County's Intranet, or other system used by DES. The County shall also make all personnel

rules, regulations, and policies available on the County's Intranet and assure that employees are made aware of changes in a timely manner.

Section 2.11 Seniority

- A. Seniority shall be determined by continuous service in the Department of Emergency Services, EMS Division, and calculated from the date full-time employment in the EMS Division commenced. Continuous service shall be broken by only resignation, termination or retirement. If two or more employees have the same employment date within the EMS Division, employees will be chosen based upon date of birth (oldest).
- B. The Department shall establish a seniority list based on paragraph A of this section, and post this list to all bargaining unit members by July 1 of each year. The Union may notify the Department, in writing, of any objections to the seniority list within 14 days of the posting of the list. Employees are required to make any objections to their placement on the list through the Union.
- C. Platoon transfers and station assignments shall be handled in accordance with the Department's Duty Schedule and Platoon Deployment policy. Seniority shall be the primary determinate in the bid process.
- D. If there is a vacancy within the EMS Division of equal rank and two or more candidates are equally qualified for the transfer, the qualified bargaining unit member with the highest seniority shall be transferred into the vacancy.

Section 2.12 Layoffs

- A. In the event of a layoff of one or more bargaining unit employees, the employee(s) with the least seniority as defined in Section 2.11 (A) shall be laid off first.
- B. If a bargaining unit employee is laid off, that employee shall be placed on a preferred reemployment list for a period of 24 months.
- C. If an employee is recalled from layoff within 24 months of their termination date, they will be rehired at the rate of pay and leave accrual rates they received as of the date they were laid off, with no loss of accrued seniority. Years of services for purposes of determining retirement benefits shall be determined in accordance with the terms of the Charles County Pension Plan.
- D. If an employee is recalled to a position other than the one they were in at the time of their layoff, they will be required to complete a probationary period.
- E. During the period of time that the employee is laid off, they will not accrue seniority.

ARTICLE 3 – POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE (P.A.C.)

The County agrees to deduct on a biweekly basis from the payroll checks of employees covered by this Agreement, who so request in writing, voluntary contributions to the Professional Paramedics and EMTs of Charles County Political Action Committee (P.A.C.) fund. The Union agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the County from any loss or damages arising from the operation of this Article.

ARTICLE 4 – MANAGEMENT RIGHTS

Except as specifically modified or restricted in this Agreement, the County's right to manage DES services shall be consistent with Charles County Code § 197-28, and the County shall retain all rights reserved to it under Charles County Code § 197-28.

ARTICLE 5 – RULES AND REGULATIONS

The Union agrees that its members shall comply with all County DES rules and regulations, including those relating to conduct and work performance, unless specifically modified in this Agreement. The County will ensure that employees have access to a readily available electronic copy of all DES rules, regulations, and SOPs (SOG).

The Union shall be given 14 days advance notice of any changes to internal DES SOP's. For all unified SOP's and/or Special Orders, the Union and the volunteer fire companies shall be notified concurrently.

ARTICLE 6 – WAGES

Section 6.1 Wages

A. Cost of Living/Bonus Fiscal Year 2026

- (1) Employees covered by this Agreement will receive a 1% cost of living adjustment ("COLA") in July 2025 when Fiscal Year 2026 begins. Members will begin receiving this adjustment on their July 25, 2025, paycheck. In the event that other County employees (exclusive of Sworn Officers in the Charles County Sheriff's Office) receive a COLA in excess of 1% in FY2026, employees covered by this Agreement shall receive the difference between the COLA received by other County employees and 1% at the same time that other County employees receive their COLA.
- (2) If the County grants a bonus, additional COLA, or other wage adjustment within FY2026 to employees on the County payroll (exclusive of Sworn Officers in the Charles County Sheriff's Office), employees covered by this Agreement will receive the bonus, additional COLA, or wage adjustment under the same terms.

B. Merit Increase Fiscal Year 2026

Employees covered by this Agreement shall receive a merit increase, if eligible, on their anniversary date in FY2026.

C. Cost of Living/Bonus/Merit Increase FY 2027

- (1) The County will notify the Union, in writing, of any recommendations for changes in compensation for employees covered by this Agreement resulting from the Compensation and Classification study expected to be completed in Calendar Year 2025 ("2025 Study").
- (2) Within 15 calendar days of the Union being notified of any recommendations for changes in compensation for employees covered by this Agreement resulting from the 2025 Study, the Union will inform the County, in writing, whether it intends to accept the recommendations. If the Union chooses to accept the recommendations, they will take effect at the same time as changes recommended by the 2025 Study take effect for other County employees and the County shall not be required to engage in collective bargaining negotiations over FY27 wages, including merit increases and bonuses. In addition to changes recommended by the 2025 Study, in the event that

the County grants a cost of living increase, bonus and/or merit increase to other County employees (exclusive of employees of the Charles County Sheriff's Office) in FY27, employees covered by this Agreement shall receive an equivalent cost of living increase or bonus at the same time that other County employees receive their cost of living increase and/or bonus and shall receive a merit increase (if granted to other County employees) on their anniversary date.

- (3) If the Union declines to accept the recommendations, any changes in FY27 compensation (including merit increases and bonuses) will be negotiated as part of a wage reopener and shall be completed by June 1, 2026 unless the County and the Union agree to extend the deadline.

D. Cost of Living/Bonus Fiscal Year 2028 and 2029

In FY28 and FY29, Employees covered by this Agreement shall receive a cost of living increase or bonus only if other County employees (exclusive of employees of the Charles County Sheriff's Office) receive a cost of living increase or bonus. In the event that other County employees receive a cost of living increase or bonus, employees covered by this Agreement shall receive an equivalent cost of living increase or bonus at the same time that other County employees receive their cost of living increase or bonus.

E. Merit Increases Fiscal Year 2028 and 2029

In FY28 and FY29, Employees covered by this Agreement shall receive a merit increase only if other County employees (exclusive of employees of the Charles County Sheriff's Office) receive a merit increase. In the event that other County employees receive a merit increase, employees covered by this Agreement shall receive an equivalent merit increase on their anniversary date.

F. Wage Scale for Bargaining Unit Members

- (1) Wages shall be paid in accordance with the pay scales established by the County (as revised) and attached hereto as Exhibit A. Employees shall receive their pay on a biweekly basis but overtime shall be calculated on a weekly basis. The beginning of the Fair Labor Standards Acts seven-day pay period shall be 1900 hours on Saturday evening for employees assigned to a shift schedule, and 0700 hours on Saturday morning for employees assigned to day work.
- (2) Employees covered by this Agreement who are assigned to a shift schedule shall work twenty-four (24) consecutive hours on duty, followed by seventy-two (72) consecutive hours off duty. Employees assigned to a shift schedule shall be assigned to work 2,184 hours annually. The shift schedule shall commence at 0700 hours. For the duration of this Agreement, the County agrees not to reduce the number of bargaining unit PINS assigned to this schedule as of July 1, 2025.
- (3) Employees covered by this Agreement who are assigned to day work shall work shifts at the discretion of the EMS Chief. Employees assigned to day work shall be assigned to work 2,080 hours annually.
- (4) Additional or alternative schedules may be established by the County during the term of this Agreement, provided, however, that the County must give at least 30 days written notice to the Union prior to the implementation of any such change.
- (5) During the term of this Agreement only, if the County establishes a shift schedule other than that set forth in Section 6.1.F(2), an employee may not be involuntarily required to move from a twenty-four (24) hour shift to an alternate shift schedule. This provision shall be removed from the Collective Bargaining Agreement upon its expiration unless otherwise agreed to by the parties.

(6) Earnings for the purposes of determining benefits under the Charles County Pension Plan will be calculated based on an employee's regularly scheduled hours.

G. Leave Sellback

In the event the County decides to make a Leave Sell Back Program available to County employees, employees covered by this Agreement will have the option to participate in the Leave Sell Back Program under the same terms and conditions as other County employees. Employees covered by this agreement will be able to sell Annual or Compensatory time.

Section 6.2 Acting Pay

Acting pay shall be handled in accordance with the Charles County Government Personnel Policy and Procedures Manual, Chapter 5, as amended.

Section 6.3 Call Back Pay

An employee who is called back to physically report to work from off-duty by career officers authorized by the Chief and who does in fact perform duties on behalf of the Department during their normal off-duty hours, shall be paid for a minimum of two (2) hours.

An employee who is required by a career officer authorized by the Chief to complete a time sheet, respond to a phone call, text message or email message, attend a virtual meeting, and/or attend a virtual training while off duty without physically returning to work may be entitled to compensation for such time under Section 6.5 of this Agreement. However, such activity does not entitle an employee to the minimum of two (2) hours pay required for off duty employees called back to physically report to work.

Section 6.4 Holiday Pay

A. An employee covered by this Agreement who is assigned to day work shall receive Holiday Pay in the following manner:

- (1) Employees assigned to day work shall be granted a day off with pay on all County-observed holidays. Employees will be paid their base hourly rate of pay for the hours they are scheduled to work on any day that is a County-observed holiday, regardless of whether they perform any work that day.
- (2) If an employee assigned to day work is required by the Chief or Director to perform work on the date the County observes a holiday, the employee will receive one (1) times their base hourly rate of pay for all time worked that day in addition to one (1) times their base hourly rate of pay for all time worked that day.

B. An employee covered by this Agreement who is assigned to shift work shall receive Holiday Pay in the following manner:

- (1) Employees shall be given Holiday Pay for the actual date of the Holiday, not on the date observed by the County, if the holiday falls on a weekend.
- (2) If an employee works on a designated holiday, they shall be paid at the rate of two (2) times their base hourly rate of pay for all hours worked on the holiday.

- (3) If an employee works on a designated holiday and works in excess of their regular hours, they shall be paid at the rate of two and one-half (2.5) times their base hourly rate of pay for all hours worked on the holiday.
- (4) If an employee does not work any hours on a "core" holiday (New Years Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas), they will receive eight hours of pay at one (1) times their base hourly rate of pay for that day.
- (5) If an employee does not work any hours on a current or future designated holiday that is not a "core" holiday (as defined above), they will not receive any pay for that day.

C. An employee covered by this Agreement shall have the option of receiving holiday pay as pay or as compensatory time.

Section 6.5 Overtime Pay

- A. An employee covered by this Agreement who is authorized to and who works in excess of their regular scheduled hours shall, at the employee's option, have the option of receiving pay at the rate of one and one-half (1.5) hours for each overtime hour worked or receive compensatory time at the rate of one and one-half (1.5) hours for each overtime hour worked. All leave with pay shall be considered hours worked for the purposes of computing overtime.
- B. Calculation of Overtime. Overtime shall be compensated as follows:

- 0-7 minutes -No compensation
- 8-22 minutes -One-quarter hour wages at 1.5 times
- 23-37 minutes -One-half hour wages at 1.5 times
- 38-52 minutes -Three-quarter hour wages at 1.5 times
- 53-67 minutes -One (1) hour of wages at 1.5 times

Section 6.6 Field Training Officer/Preceptor Pay

An employee covered by this Agreement who is designated as a FTO/Preceptor will receive a differential of \$2.00 (two) dollars per hour for all hours in which they serve in this capacity. The differential will be paid bi-weekly.

ARTICLE 7 – PENSION BENEFITS

Section 7.1 General

The County agrees to maintain the Charles County Pension Plan ("Plan"). Employees shall be one-hundred (100%) vested in the Pension Plan after five (5) years of actual service.

Section 7.2 Normal Retirement

- A. Normal retirement shall be based on twenty-five (25) years of actual service as defined in the Pension Plan with the County, or attainment of age sixty (60), at a retirement rate of two and one-half percent (2.50%) per year of the "Final Average Earnings" of the employee as defined in the Pension Plan.

- B. Employees may continue to accrue an additional two and one-half percent (2.50%) per year benefit accrual for every year after normal retirement for a maximum seventy-five (75%) Final Average Earnings.

Section 7.3 Contribution into the Pension Plan

An employee covered by this Agreement shall contribute eight (8%) of their current base salary into the Pension Plan.

Section 7.4 Early Retirement Program

Effective July 1, 2025, the Plan shall be amended to include a limited early retirement window program ("Program") for Bargaining Unit employees and EMS Management that shall include the following terms:

- A. Participants in the Program will have any early retirement penalty waived (meaning that their retirement benefit is calculated using the same formula as Normal Retirement under the Plan).
- B. Employees must have at least 19 years of credited service as of July 1 of the CBA year in which they apply to participate in Program.
- C. Except as provided in Paragraph E, the program is limited to a total of eight (8) employees over the life of this CBA.
- D. No more than two (2) employees can participate in any fiscal year unless an earlier year had less than two (2) employees or except as provided in Paragraph E.
- E. The County may, in its sole discretion, agree to allow more than eight (8) employees over the life of the CBA (and more than two (2) employees each fiscal year) to participate in the program if the Director of Emergency Services, the Director of Fiscal Administrative Services, and the County Administrator agree to do so.
- F. Employees must make an election to participate in the Program between July 1 and September 30 and retire on July 16th of the year following election.
- G. In the event more than two (2) people elect to participate, employees will be chosen based on seniority. In the event that they have the same seniority date, employees will be chosen based upon date of birth (oldest).
- H. Once an employee submits a written election to participate in the Program and they are chosen, their decision to take early retirement is irrevocable. Employees may withdraw their election at any time prior to being chosen.
- I. The Program automatically terminates upon the expiration of this CBA on June 30, 2029.

ARTICLE 8 – LEAVE PROVISIONS**Section 8.1 Leave**

- A. Annual, Sick, Compensatory, Paid Time Off (PTO), Bereavement, Jury, Military and Leave without pay shall be handled in accordance with the Charles County Government Personnel Policy and Procedures Manual, Chapter 17, as amended.
- B. In any fiscal year where the County authorizes a leave sellback program for other County employees, such program shall be offered to employees covered by this Agreement. If a leave sell back program is implemented, bargaining unit employees can sell up to forty (40) hours of annual or compensatory leave.
- C. If an employee elects to work a shift for which the employee had previously scheduled leave, the County will cancel the leave request and the employee will be paid for the hours worked. This provision shall not apply if the employee is required by the County to work a shift they were scheduled to be on leave.

Section 8.2 Substitution of Shifts

The substitution of shifts will follow the Department of Emergency Services SOP# DP.DES.EMS.OPS.001, Leave, Open Shift, Shift Trades, and Mandatory Hold Over Policy, as amended.

Section 8.3 Rehire Rights

An employee whose employment terminates as a result of a medical leave of absence shall be granted preferential hiring rights. This means that such employee shall be placed at the top of the Eligibility List, and hired first, provided that they are able to perform the essential functions of their job, with or without reasonable accommodation.

ARTICLE 9 – TRAINING

Employees are required to successfully complete and maintain various training re-certifications pursuant to the required regulation, law and/or standards.

ARTICLE 10 – GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**Section 10.1 Grievance Coverage**

- A. A “grievance” is defined as an alleged violation of this Agreement or the County rules and regulations affecting terms and conditions of employment for employees covered by this Agreement.
- B. Any employee or group of employees covered by this Agreement may present grievances to IAFF Local 4658 to have those grievances resolved. However, only IAFF Local 4658 may file a grievance.
- C. The County has the exclusive right to discipline and discharge an employee under Code §197-28A.7. However, disciplinary matters may be grieved in accordance with the provisions of this Article 10.
- D. The procedures set forth in this Section 10 shall be the exclusive remedy for the resolution of grievances filed by the Union. The Union may not file a grievance pursuant to Code § 197, Article III.

Section 10.2 Exclusions

There are certain instances when a grievance cannot be filed. The following situations identify those instances that would not be considered as justifiable reasons for a grievance action:

- (1) Part-time, probationary, and appointed employees are not eligible to file a grievance.
- (2) Actions taken by the County Commissioners are not subject to grievance.
- (3) Non-disciplinary terminations are not subject to grievance.
- (4) Non-selection for promotion is not subject to grievance.
- (5) Oral counselings are not subject to grievance.
- (6) Performance appraisals which meet the minimum score for a merit increase.
- (7) Position classifications are not subject to grievance.
- (8) Actions resulting from a reorganization, administrative transfer, or administrative demotion are not subject to grievance.

Section 10.3. - Procedure.

All grievances shall be in writing on an approved grievance form. The writing shall state specifically the substance of the grievance and identify the aggrieved Employee and the specific provisions of this Agreement alleged to have been violated. All grievances shall be processed in the following manner:

Step 1:

The Union will submit the grievance in writing within fourteen (14) calendar days of the occurrence of the actions being grieved or within fourteen (14) calendar days of the Union having reasonable knowledge of the actions, to the Director of the Department of Emergency Services. The Director of EMS or their designee shall meet with the Union and the aggrieved Employee to discuss the grievance within fourteen (14) calendar days of receipt of the grievance form and shall reply to the Union, in writing, within fourteen (14) calendar days after the meeting.

Step 2:

If not resolved at Step 1, the Union may appeal the grievance on the approved form to the Director of Human Resources within fourteen (14) calendar days of the date of the Step 1 decision. The Director of Human Resources or their designee shall meet with the Union and the aggrieved Employee to discuss the grievance within fourteen (14) calendar days of receipt of the grievance form and shall reply to the Union, in writing, within fourteen (14) calendar days after the meeting.

Step 3:

If not resolved at Step 2, the Union may appeal the grievance on the approved form to the County Administrator or their designee within fourteen (14) calendar days of the date of the Step 2 decision. The appeal shall state specifically the substance of the grievance and identify the aggrieved Employee(s) and the specific provisions of this Agreement involved. The Union and the aggrieved Employee shall meet with the County Administrator or their designee within fourteen (14) calendar days of the filing of the grievance at this Step to discuss its substance and possible resolutions. The County Administrator or their designee shall give a decision in writing within fourteen (14) calendar days after the aforesaid meeting.

Step 4

If the grievance has not been resolved in step 3, the Union may, within fourteen (14) calendar days following the Step 3 decision from the County Administrator, submit the grievance to arbitration through the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS). The FMCS shall supply a list of five qualified labor arbitrators from the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area. Both the Employer and the Union shall have the right to strike two names from the list. The parties shall flip a coin to determine who shall strike the first name; the other party shall then strike one name. The process shall be repeated, and the remaining person shall be the arbitrator. After the selection of the arbitrator as outlined above, the party requesting arbitration shall advise the FMCS of the name of the arbitrator.

The decision of the arbitrator shall be final and binding on the parties hereto. Expenses for the arbitrator's services and proceedings shall be borne equally by the Union and the Employer.

Each party shall be responsible for compensating its own witnesses and representatives. If either party desires a verbatim record of the proceedings it may cause such a record to be made by a qualified Court Reporter. The cost of a verbatim record for proceedings shall be borne by the party causing the record to be made or, if requested by both, shall be split equally.

Section 10.4. - Time Limits.

- A. A grievance must be presented and processed in accordance with the steps, time limits, and conditions contained in this Article. The Employer and Union recognize that time is of the essence and the prompt settlement of grievances is important to a sound and harmonious relationship.
- B. If the Employer fails to provide an answer to a grievance within the time limits so provided, the Employee or Union may immediately appeal to the next step.
- C. The failure of the Union to act upon a grievance within the time limits shall be deemed a forfeiture of the right to advance further in the grievance process.
- D. The time limits prescribed herein may be altered and/or waived by mutual agreement, in writing, by the Employer and the Union.

ARTICLE 11 – SAFETY AND HEALTH

Section 11.1 Cooperation

The County and the Union agree to cooperate to the fullest extent in the promotion of safety and health.

Section 11.2 Annual Physical

The Department's current practice is to provide for an appropriately tailored annual physical for personnel 40 years or older, at no cost to the employee. An appropriately tailored bi-annual physical shall be provided to employees 39 years or younger, at no cost to the employee. The results of the physical shall be maintained in a confidential file, separate from the employee's personnel file. A copy of any report shall be provided to the employee.

Section 11.3 Personal Protective Equipment

The Employer will meet with the Union with regard to personal protective equipment utilized by the employees. The Employer agrees that it will solicit input from the Union with regard to the introduction of new equipment, or the evaluation, replacement or elimination of existing equipment, and that in its selection of equipment, the Employer will place primary emphasis on the health and safety of its employees.

ARTICLE 12 – PERSONNEL FILES

An employee's official file is maintained by the Department of Human Resources. An employee, upon presenting their identification, shall be permitted by appointment to examine their personnel file.

ARTICLE 13 – NO STRIKE/NO LOCKOUT

The County and the Union subscribe to the principle that differences shall be resolved by peaceful and appropriate means without interruption of work. During the term of this Agreement, neither the Union nor its agents or any employee, for any reason will authorize, institute, aid, condone or engage in a slowdown, work stoppage, strike, or any other interference with the work and statutory functions or obligations of the employer. During the term of this Agreement, neither the employer nor its agents for any reason shall authorize, institute, aid or promote any lockout of employees covered by this Agreement.

ARTICLE 14 – SAVINGS CLAUSE

If any provision of this Agreement, or the application of such provision, should be rendered or declared invalid by any court action or by reason of any existing or subsequently enacted legislation, the remaining parts or portions of this Agreement shall remain in full force and effect; and upon issuance of such a decision, the County and the Union agree to immediately negotiate a substitute for the invalidated Article, Section or portion thereof.

ARTICLE 15 – DURATION

This Agreement shall become effective on July 1, 2025, unless otherwise stated in specific sections, and shall remain in full force and effect until June 30, 2029.

This Agreement shall be automatically renewed from year to year after June 30, 2029, unless either party shall notify the other in writing no later than October 1, 2028, (or October 1st of any subsequent year thereafter in the case of an automatic renewal) that it desires to terminate, modify or amend this Agreement.

The County and the Union agree that the parties may enter into mutually acceptable side letter agreements to clarify provisions of this Agreement during its term.

062625

This Agreement, consisting of 16 pages is signed on this 9 *day of July, 2025, in Charles County, Maryland.*

The County Commissioners of Charles County

By: 
Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq, Commissioner President

Local 4658, International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO

By: 
Aaron Kidder, President IAFF 4658

By: 
Thomas Councillor, Vice President IAFF 4658