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February 2, 2020

To: Federal Emergency Management Agency  
Attn: SAFER Grant Manager  
500 C Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20472

To whom it may concern,

I am a volunteer firefighter at the College Park Volunteer Fire Department, in College Park, MD, and one of the benefactors of the SAFER grant, receiving a stipend and tuition reimbursement. As a full time student, I typically have a very heavy course load in the Fire Protection Engineering program. During the semester I also work two jobs, one of which is on campus, and another at BWI Airport as an intern. I do all this while also dedicating most of my weeknights and weekends to serving the firehouse as a Fire/EMS Sergeant, and master apparatus driver. All combined, I have little time to spare, and typically spend my free time working, doing homework, or catching up on sleep.

The SAFER grant has afforded me many opportunities, primarily the ability to allow myself more time to dedicate towards school and the firehouse. The stipend and tuition assistance combined has allowed me to supplement my income, and reduce the time I spend at my other two jobs, and still be able to pay for necessities such as groceries, gas, and most importantly, my tuition, without having to take out additional loans. SAFER has positively impacted my education, keeping my GPA above 3.0, also allowing me to dedicate more time to the firehouse, especially during the day when I would typically be working. This time is spent conducting driver training with new apparatus drivers, and performing other firehouse functions to include moving apparatus to and from maintenance shops, picking up supplies, and training probationary members. This week alone (1/27 – 2/2) I have led 6 hours of driver training with 3 different members, allowing them opportunities to serve in new roles, and provide services to the communities we serve.

All of these things would not have been possible without the free time the SAFER grant has afforded me. SAFER has given me the chance to serve my community even more, and still maintain my education, finances, and health in good order.

Sincerely,  
Caleb J Cotner