



MAINE LEGISLATURE

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To: Joint Standing Committee on Government Oversight

From: Senator Pinny Beebe-Center and Representative Suzanne Salisbury, Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Subject: OPEGA Investigation Request

Senator Hickman, Representative Fay and distinguished members of the Government Oversight Committee, last week, the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee held a confirmation hearing for the position of State Fire Marshal wherein the committee voted 8-4 to confirm Richard McCarthy to the position.

Prior to the confirmation hearing, the chairs were made aware of long-standing issues regarding the operations of the Fire Marshal's Office, including concerns that rose to the level of a formal complaint filed with Maine's labor board, according to reporting by the Bangor Daily News[1].

We both received phone calls from former and current employees of the Fire Marshal's Office who expressed deep reservations about confirming McCarthy who served for 22 years as the assistant fire marshal. In particular, these former and current employees expressed concern about confirming an individual who had been in a position of leadership amidst a workplace culture rife with misogyny, lack of care for fire victims and unresponsiveness to employee complaints and community needs. During the confirmation hearing, the Department of Criminal Justice and Public Safety reassured the committee that these allegations would be addressed.

After investigations by the Augusta-based Crisis and Counseling Centers in 2018 and again in 2021 that demonstrated an escalation of worker dissatisfaction and workplace hostility, this committee believes it is within the best interest of the public and those working in the Fire Marshal's Office that an official review of the office be completed by the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability and the results of the review be shared with the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Salisbury
Pinny Beebe-Center
Maine State Representative
House District 128

Maine State Senator
Senate District 12

[1] <https://www.bangordailynews.com/2023/02/23/mainefocus/fire-marshals-office-complaints-joam40zk0w/>