



Local Government Center 60 Community Drive Augusta, Maine 04330-9486

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and Distinguished Members of the Criminal Justice and Public safety Committee,

I am Chief Bill Gillespie from Liberty, Maine, and the Legislative Liaison for the Maine Fire Chiefs Association, representing more than 400 Fire Chiefs throughout the state. I am submitting this letter of **support** of **LD 1802 An Act to Add Certain Volunteer Firefighters to the Definition of "Volunteer Firefighter"**. Thank you, Senator Stewart, for sponsoring this Legislation.

Maines Fire service has a long and proud history of Volunteer firefighters giving their time back to the communities in which they live in. Unfortunately, the communities where they live do not provide enough job opportunities forcing them to travel further for work. This makes it harder to recruit people due to more families depending on two incomes to make ends meet and growing families are participating in extracurricular activities that take up a lot of time. All of this leaves little time to volunteer.

One way we have encouraged membership is to offer many different incentives. Some departments offer an annual stipend while others pay an hourly minimum wage when on an emergency call. This bill will allow more members to qualify for other benefits including The Maine Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAP).

Most members still contribute and volunteer by attending trainings, meetings, and fundraisers on their own time. We ask you to support this legislation to help us in us continue the efforts in increasing Volunteers within the fire service.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Bill Gillespie

Maine Fire Chiefs Legislative Liaison