

James Graves
Maine Fire Service Institute
LD 210

Testimony in Support of Continued Funding for the Regional Fire Service Training Fund

MRS Title 20-A, §9005

Chairperson Senator Anne Beebe-Center, Representative Tavis Hasenfus and, Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, My name is James A. Graves, and I am the Director of the Maine Fire Service Institute (MFSI) within the Maine Community College System. I come before you today to respectfully and humbly request your continued support of the \$200,000 in funding for the Regional Fire Service Training Fund, as established under MRS Title 20-A, §9005.

The Regional Fire Service Training Fund has been instrumental in elevating the level of firefighting certifications across the State of Maine, improving firefighter safety, and ensuring compliance with state rules and laws. It serves as a critical resource for municipalities, particularly in underserved regions, enabling fire departments to access much-needed training opportunities that would otherwise be financially unattainable.

This funding directly supports a wide range of essential training components, including:

- Textbooks and Online Learning Platforms: Providing fire service candidates with high-quality, up-to-date educational materials.
- Learning Management Software (LMS): Ensuring modern, accessible training delivery methods.
- Expert Fire Service Instruction: Utilizing certified Maine Fire Service Instructors who bring valuable experience to every training program.
- Hands-On Training Materials: Supplying resources such as lumber, roofing materials, hay/straw, pallets and PFAS-free training foam for practical exercises, including ventilation, forced entry, and fire suppression.
- Free Certification Exams: Offering both skills-based and written exams at no cost to candidates, eliminating financial barriers to entry.
- Fire Training Props and Equipment: On loan from MFSI to help provide practical training evolutions and ensure confidence in a safe environment.

In addition to supporting individual firefighter candidates, this program has positively impacted the Maine Fire Service as a whole by:

- Enhancing safety and compliance standards for live fire training evolutions.
- Aligning with statewide Live Fire Training Facilities plans that prioritize firefighter readiness while minimizing environmental impact.
- Expanding access to training in rural and economically challenged areas, ensuring all communities are better prepared to protect their residents.

The benefits of this program extend far beyond certification. It strengthens the fabric of our firefighting community, fosters public safety, and ensures that Maine's fire service professionals are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to respond effectively and safely to emergencies. Thus protecting the citizens, those that visit Maine each year, public and private infrastructure from fire and emergencies.

As the State of Maine Fire Administrator and Director of MFSI, I have seen firsthand how this funding transforms fire departments and communities. I respectfully urge you to support the continued funding of \$200,000 to sustain this vital fire service-training program.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely and respectfully,

James A. Graves
Director of Fire Training
Maine Fire Service Institute
Southern Maine Community College – Mid-Coast Campus

Supplemental information attached on fire training programs over the past two years.