

Cumberland – Oxford Counties Fire Chiefs Association

6 Perreault Lane Bridgton, Maine 04009

President Tommie C. McKenzie

Secretary/Treasurer Todd Perreault

March 3, 2025

Testimony in Support of “An Act to Increase the Funding to the Live Fire Service Training Facilities Funds” LD 679

To the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
From Tommie C. McKenzie, Lovell, Maine

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Tommie C. McKenzie, and I have the honor of serving the Maine Fire Service Community as President of the Cumberland/Oxford Counties Fire Chiefs’ Association, the past President of the Western Maine Firefighters Association, as the Chief Fire Officer for several communities for more than twenty-fire years, and as a firefighter serving my community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in staunch support of this legislation, “An Act to Increase Funding to the Live Fire Service Training Facilities Fund.” This is extremely critical to the safety and training of the State’s Firefighters.

My background includes the fire service, EMS, and Law Enforcement, through different uniforms they all have a critical element in common and that is training. Training is the most important part of any job and in emergency services training means the difference between life and death. Not only for the members of the community we serve but for the first responders, in this case our Firefighters. Without proper training the task of our firefighter can be dangerously extinguished and one of the most critical aspects of our training is being able to gain live fire training under a controlled environment. You always train as you would work under real conditions so that you do not have to think about what to do now but you have the knowledge and muscle memory to react and take control of the incident and mitigate life-threatening emergencies.

This brings me to our Live Fire Training Facilities. These facilities are currently few and far between and that ones we have are aging. Some are outdated, some have structural issues and like all of us are just getting old and to the end of their lifecycle. Distance is another issue today, as with a response to any emergency distance is a critical element, time and distance is not our friend. For many of us, our trainees’ firefighters as well as our veterans, must travel a great distance and consume valuable time, their time, department time, and community time. This all comes with an added expense compensating them for travel time and not direct training time.

Another issue is the recruitment and retention of firefighters. The better the training with modern facilities the better the attraction to the fire service there is. Not just for volunteers, paid-on-call, and the career firefighters. Training attracts people and opens an opportunity for a career. It builds the needed firsthand experience for confidence. A Live Fire Training Facility demonstrates the state’s commitment to the fire service and the people of our State.

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As we all know, our firefighters want to help those who call for emergency assistance and to serve and protect their communities. They must be training, confident, equipped, and well trained. This is just the venue for that task, Live Fire Training Facilities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to support this legislation, LD 679, as it is critically needed for the successful training of our firefighters.

Sincerely,

Tommie McKenzie

Tommie C. McKenzie,
President COFCA
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Tommie McKenzie
Lovell
LD 679

March 3, 2025

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