



## **Maine Fire Chiefs'** **A S S O C I A T I O N**

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

Senator Bailey and Representative Gramlich and distinguished members of Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services,

I am Chief Bill Gillespie from Liberty, proudly serving as Fire Chief and Legislative Liaison for the Maine Fire Chiefs Association, representing over 400 Fire Chiefs statewide.

Today, I am honored to submit this letter in support of LD 784, **An Act to Require Health Insurance Coverage for Specialized Risk Screening for First Responders.**

Building on the momentum of the 131st Legislature, where we united to raise awareness about the inherent health risks associated with our professions, we successfully secured \$2 million to initiate grant opportunities for a small population of providers. The overwhelming response, with over 55 individuals expressing interest, underscores the pressing need for this support. By integrating specialized risk screening into annual physical or employment physicals, we can proactively prevent long-term, life-altering health issues.

Personally, I did not have the option for early detection. In 2000, at the age of 35, I underwent emergency surgery to remove blockage in my main artery. Thanks to advances in medical testing, similar blockages can now be identified earlier, before symptoms may arising. My recent 7-day hospitalization in January 2023 served as a poignant reminder of the importance of proactive care.

As first responders, we acknowledge the inherent dangers of our profession, but we also recognize the potential for positive change. By working together, we can create a healthier, safer future for ourselves and our communities. We urge you to join us in this effort by supporting LD 784, empowering us to take control of our health and well-being.

Respectfully

Chief Bill Gillespie