



Solutions for a  
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Vice President of Policy and Advocacy, Defend Our Health  
In Support of LD 1830, "Resolve, to Establish a Pilot Program to Protect Firefighters from  
Cancer"

Before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
May 7, 2025

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the vice president of policy and advocacy for Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health's mission is to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food and drinking water, healthy homes and products that are toxic-free and climate friendly. I am here to testify in support of LD 1830, "Resolve, to Establish a Pilot Program to Protect Firefighters from Cancer."

Firefighters, both career and volunteer, face unique and repeated exposures to carcinogenic materials while protecting lives and property. These exposures are cumulative and unavoidable in the line of duty. Studies consistently show that firefighters are significantly more likely than the general public to develop various forms of cancer, including cancers of the lungs, liver, bladder, prostate, and more. According to the Firefighter Cancer Support Network "Cancer caused 66 percent of the career firefighter line-of-duty deaths from 2002 to 2019, according to data from the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF). Heart disease caused 18 percent of career LODDs for the same period. Firefighters have a 9 percent higher risk of being diagnosed with cancer and a 14 percent higher risk of dying from cancer than the general U.S. population, according to research by the CDC/National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety." Early detection is our strongest line of defense.

We appreciate Rep. Bagshaw for bringing this bill forward. We do have a concern with the language that we would urge the committee to address when moving forward with the bill. Our first concern is with who pays for the testing. The bill states that firefighters can be reimbursed up to \$1300 for any testing. That's great. However, medical testing is expensive. Depending on the type of testing, \$1300 will not be enough. Just from my personal experience, I got a bill from my doctor's office for \$3200 for one cardiac MRI. Additionally, this implies they have to pay for those tests up front and be reimbursed. That isn't financially feasible for many firefighters. We don't believe that the firefighters should be required to pay for any of the testing under the pilot program.

LD 1830 acknowledges the risks firefighters face and offers them the same commitment to safety that they give to us every day. If we can catch even a few cases of cancer early, the program will be worth it. We urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1830.