



Professional Fire Fighters of Maine

Affiliated with the International Association of Fire Fighters

Testimony of Michael Scott, President

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

LD 2169 – “An Act to Improve the Public Employees Disability Retirement Program by Modifying Provisions Controlling the Reduction of Benefits and Clarifying Terminology”

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder and other esteemed members of the Labor Committee. My name is Michael Scott; I live and work in the City of Auburn. As the President of the Professional Fire Fighters of Maine, representing over 1,300 First Responders and their families across the State of Maine, I'm here to testify in **support of LD 2169**.

I want to speak with you not as a lawyer or an actuary, but as someone who has seen the reality of what happens when a career in public safety — a job that defines who you are — must end earlier than expected.

We become firefighters because we are driven by **service, purpose, and action**. Our work is not just a paycheck — it is **gainful activity** in the deepest sense: physical, mental, and emotional. Day in and day out, we train, respond, and push ourselves because we want to make a difference. Being active in this work gives us identity, structure, pride, and community.

When injury or illness forces us off the job early — even when we still want to serve — it can feel like losing a piece of ourselves. We don't just lose the ability to do tasks — we lose the *role* we've built our lives around. We lose the daily rhythm of purposeful work. We lose the chance to contribute in the way we were trained to contribute. And too often, we lose **financial stability** while we're trying to rebuild what's left of our lives.

We want to work when we can. Most of us want to remain productive members of our communities after an injury. But we should not be *penalized* for it — financially or emotionally. A clearer, fairer retirement system will let someone live with dignity, pursue gainful activity where possible, and retain a sense of purpose even after their firefighting career is cut short.

Imagine dedicating years to serving your community — answering calls, training every shift, building trust with your team — only to be told that your best effort to stay active after disability will reduce the very benefits meant to protect you. That sends the wrong message about how we value public safety service.

LD 2169 helps correct that. It brings clarity so that firefighters and other public employees know what to expect. It prevents unintended reductions that strip away not only financial security but a sense of personal worth. And it respects the reality that when you've given your body and heart to service, your identity doesn't just turn off because you leave the job.

I urge you to **support LD 2169** and help ensure that Maine values not only the work we do, but the lives we continue to live after that work is no longer possible.

Thank you for your time and I would be pleased to address any questions you may have.