

Good morning, Senators, Representatives and Committee members. My name is Marc Anderson, and I am a Firefighter at the Maine Air National Guard Fire Department in Bangor. I am here on my personal time to speak in favor of using the \$250 million budget surplus to fund LD 1236 An Act to Address Employee Retention of State Employees Who Are Firefighters at Bangor International Airport.

I first became a firefighter at the airport in 1997. I am responsible for driving Aircraft Rescue Firefighting equipment and responding to both Aircraft and Structural emergencies. In my 29 years of service as a firefighter, we have had multiple emergencies. I am concerned that some of the aircraft incidents may have contributed to my elevated PFOS and PFOA levels. My annual blood tests indicate that I am in the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of the United States. This issue is not widely understood in the medical community, but firefighters (especially airport firefighters), seem to test very highly. If LD 1236 had gone into effect 5 years ago, I could have retired.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) States "The term "firefighter" and "cancer" have become so intertwined in the past decade that they are now nearly inseparable. Occupational exposure of firefighters to carcinogenic chemicals may increase their risk of developing different types of cancer. PFAS are one of the major classes of carcinogenic chemicals that firefighters are exposed to as occupational hazard. Elevated levels of PFAS have been observed in firefighters' blood serum in recent studies. Possible sources of occupational exposure to PFAS include turnout gear, aqueous film-forming foam, and air and dust at both the fire scene and fire station. Preliminary discussion on PFAS includes definition, classification, and chemical structure. The review is then followed by identifying the sources of PFAS that firefighters may encounter as an occupational hazard."

In 2015 we were provided with a structural fire engine and our call volume doubled with mutual aid responses to Bangor, Hermon, Old Town and other surrounding towns. In 2024 we had 436 responses. Of these, 121 were medical and vehicle accidents, 80 Aircraft and fuel spill responses and 26 building fires. The increase in operational tempo can reduce long-time firefighter health. In my full-time career, I have seen retirees pass too early. This bill may extend time with loved ones for firefighters with high-risk jobs. While LD 1236 may not influence my career, I think it is important to firefighter health and the sustainability of the Bangor International Airport.

LD 1236 An Act to Address Employee Retention of State Employees Who Are Firefighters at Bangor International Airport is estimated to require a **one-time** funding request from the general fund of \$500K. We are asking for legislation to allow State employees who are Firefighters at Bangor International Airport to retire after 25 years of service without penalty. All expenses for salary, benefits and equipment are 100% Federally

funded with zero expense to the State of Maine. To hire firefighters, we must have similar retirement plans with area Fire Departments. To continue to provide high-quality fire protection to the Maine Air National Guard and the Bangor International Airport we ask that you support DVEM Firefighters at Bangor International Airport by passing and funding LD 1236 in LD2212. Thank you.