

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, I'm Captain Brandon Michaud. I am here on my own personal time to speak in support of LD 1236, An Act to Address Employee Retention of State Employees Who Are Firefighters at Bangor International Airport, as part of LD 2212.

I have worked at Maine Air National Guard Fire Department since 2012. When I first applied and interviewed to be a Military Firefighter at the Bangor International Airport there were always 10 plus qualified applicants competing for a single position. Over the past 13 years I have seen less and less qualified applicants applying. Sometimes we only have one or two qualified people for an opening. We are losing applicants to surrounding communities who work less hours per week and have no age requirement to retire.

Firefighting is a dangerous profession with the average life expectancy of a firefighter being 10 years less than the general population. Due to the nature of our profession, we are exposed to carcinogens not only from fires, fuel spills, and diesel fumes, but also from the Firefighting Foam and flame retardant personal protective gear we wear exposing us to PFAS-PFOAS, and other carcinogens. Firefighters have a 14% higher death rate than the average American as well as higher rates of cardiovascular disease, sleeping disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and respiratory illnesses.

Not only are we having less applicants, but we have also lost several employees to neighboring departments with better retirement packages. Employees that we have invested a lot of time and resources training.

LD 1236 has passed in the House and Senate. The State Police and Fire Investigators retirement system have both been changed to add no age restrictions. I urge all committee members to ensure there is funding in LD 2212 to change the retirement plan for us, to one with no age restriction of the Firefighters at the Bangor International Airport. Funding LD 1236 will greatly improve recruiting and retention of firefighters which will save taxpayer money in the long run.

Funding LD 1236 will have a one-time cost of approximately \$500,000. Our program is 100 percent funded by the Federal Government and the State of Maine will incur no further costs in the following years.

Thank you to the committee for your time, and please support the DVEM Firefighters at Bangor International Airport by funding LD 1236, as part of LD 2212.