

Good afternoon, Senate Chairs, House Chairs, and Committee members.

My name is Ryan McGuire, and I am a Captain at the Maine Air National Guard Fire Department in Bangor. I am here on my personal time to speak in support of funding LD 1236 An Act to Address Employee Retention of State Employees Who Are Firefighters at Bangor International Airport in LD 2212, the supplemental budget.

I started at the airport in 2013 full-time after leaving my job at Eastern Maine Medical Center as an Anesthesia Tech seeking that excitement of being a firefighter. During my application process I had to compete with a room full of people with only two open positions, and during our last hiring we had 9 applicants and only 3 showed up for an interview. My first few years, we would do mutual aid in the surrounding communities of Bangor with our tanker but in 2015 we received our structural fire engine and our calls drastically increased. Our Mission has changed but our retirement “25 years of service and 55 years old” or work schedule (24 hours on, 48 hours off) has not. Yet, firefighters in surrounding communities all have plans with 20 years of service, 50% pensions, and no age requirement, or 25 years of service at 66% pensions. Our retirement plaque that hangs in our lobby only has 32 names on it. Many members come through, but all leave for better work hours and retirement and to be honest, I am at a critical point in my career deciding if I want to stay or go as well.

Little did I know about all the hazards that come with the job especially here at the Maine Air National Guard where we would have Aqueous Film-Forming Foam (AFFF). It worked amazingly on putting out fires. Little did I know that those little bubbles were so harmful with a chemical we all are familiar with now call PFAS or PFOS, “The Forever Chemical”. Not only was it in our fire suppression, but it was also in our firefighting gear. The past few years our department includes a yearly blood draw to check our PFAS levels during our annual physicals, and all of us in the department have drastically high numbers. I have attached my blood PFAS results to this testimony that you all can see the results.

In this department I have responded to car accidents and structure fires, out in the surrounding towns and in the city. Just here at the airport we all have responded to various calls on both civilian and military aircraft like fuels spills, assisting medical aircraft, medical calls on diverting aircraft, diverting aircraft with mechanical issues just to name a few. In the past 6 months I have responded to two separate fatal plane crashes at Bangor International Airport. During the last incident, we were on scene doing our jobs without hesitation in less than 2 minutes. These calls will last with us First Responders for a lifetime, and beyond in the community.

Please work to fund 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% funded Federally with zero expenses 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 funding LD 1236.

Thank you.

Captain Ryan McGuire