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Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil, and other Honorable Members of the Committee,

Please allow me a moment to introduce myself. My name is William Gillespie, Legislative Liaison for the Maine Fire Chiefs Association and Chief of the Liberty Fire Department. I am testifying on behalf of the more than 400 Fire Chiefs in Maine. Please allow this written submission of testimony **in support** of LD 268. Thank you to Senator Dill for sponsoring this bill.

An Act to Eliminate Online Burn Permit Fees for All Areas of the State

This bill would give our Town Fire Wardens and Fire Chiefs the ability to recommend Maine residents go to a state-run online permit system. Here are a few benefits that this will provide:

- Minimization of face-to-face contact during this Pandemic that handwritten permits presents.
- Fire Rangers would receive permit information at their fingertips with more residents utilizing the state site.

The elimination of the \$7 fee will make the process of giving burn permits via the State site safer for all Towns and Departments that do not use other online sites.

In my personal experience as a Fire Chief and Town Warden, I have realized the benefits of online burn permits through another vender due to there not being an associated fee. During the height of COVID-19 I became thankful for this option to avoid direct contact and still be able to control the ability to allow open burning within my town. With over 250 burn permits issued in 2020, 3 of them were in person.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Gillespie