



Testimony of Vicki Schmidt, Hebron ME in support of LD 242, An Act To Support the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission

Feb 22 2021

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and members of the Joint Standing Committee On Criminal Justice & Public Safety.

Thank you for today's opportunity, I am Vicki Schmidt from Hebron Maine and I serve with the Buckfield Fire Department, a 14-member volunteer department in Western Maine.

As a volunteer firefighter and a State Fire Instructor III with the Maine Fire Services Institute for almost two decades I urge your support and funding of LD242. My experience has give me a very good understanding of what it takes to train, and as importantly maintain, a firefighter at skilled performance standards.

In the three years since 2018, and the fully unanimous passing and initial funding support of LD 1845 by the 128th Maine Legislature, Maine's fire services community has worked diligently to reverse the severe lack of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) compliant fire training infrastructure for Maine.

The collaborative efforts of Maine firefighters, our professional associations, our instructors, town officials, Maine Fire Services Institute and the Southern Maine Community College have been nothing short of commendable. Every penny of the funding and grant awards was completely used for the repair, replacement, or construction of NFPA compliant Live Fire Training Facilities. Furthermore, the grant design ensures the commitment, integrity, and responsibility for the future longevity of these regional facilities.

The Fire Commission has successfully lead this charge and many Commission members themselves have volunteered hundreds of hours to help establish these improvements. The value of the state funding and its return on investment to provide the basis for these facilities can not be under estimated. The funding is significantly leveraged by local towns who secure donations, volunteer time and provide hours of work and services to further magnify the grant funding. This is a fully win-win situation for taxpayers, our local, our mutual aid and regional towns, the firefighters of Maine, and most importantly, the citizens and property we are dedicated to protect.

As a State Instructor I would also like to note that these facilities provide many inherent values that are not easy to ascertain. One of the most important is the consistency of their design and operation making them more predictable and efficient to teach and instruct with. Instructors and program managers can better plan and manage all types of training in these facilities; particularly live fire training, which is some of the most challenging to teach, especially with new recruits.

The Fire Commissions goal to have a Live Fire Training Facility within an hour's travel time for 90% of Maine firefighters is not only a noble goal, it is a necessary one. It reduces costs for municipalities while ensuring efficient access to certified training. Not only has certified training proven to be one of the most important retention strategies for trained firefighters, it further works to reduce firefighter death, injuries, and workers compensation insurance claims.

(Report on Firefighter Training to the 1998 Legislature Minnesota)

<http://www.mbfte.org/forms/1998-022.pdf>

As you are aware, firefighters want to serve and protect, and we are the last to ask for help. As I read this before you, in a state full of remote listeners, many of whom are the best "big brothers and sisters" a firefighter could ask for, I urge your support of LD242. I sincerely know the Fire Commission, along with the fire services of Maine will continue to ensure our fire training facility program success.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vicki Schmidt", written on a light-colored rectangular background.

Vicki Schmidt
Firefighter, Buckfield ME
Maine Fire Services Instructor III
Maine State Federation of Firefighter, Volunteer & On-Call Firefighters
207-890-4590

Vicki Schmidt
Hebron ME

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