

**TESTIMONY
OF
JOSEPH E. THOMAS, STATE FIRE MARSHAL
MAINE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Public Hearing: April 21, 2021

"An Act to Provide Safe Gear for Female Firefighters"

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Joseph Thomas and I am the State Fire Marshal. I am here today to present testimony in opposition to LD 1440, "An Act to Provide Safe Gear for Female Firefighters".

I preface my opposition to the language of this bill by stating that the Office of State Fire Marshal is a strong supporter of providing Fire Fighters with appropriate and compliant personal protective equipment.

Our opposition to this legislation lies with the designation of the Office of State Fire Marshal to administer the fund and grant program created by this proposed legislation. The statutory mission of the Office of State Fire Marshal is the investigation for origin and cause of fires and explosions, and the fire and life safety of occupied buildings through code enforcement. This agency has no oversight of fire department operations or resources as such authority rests with the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Standards.

Presently the Bureau of Labor Standard's Compliance Directive 10-05 and associated statutory authority in MRSA Title 26 § 2103, reference the appropriate protective clothing that shall be provided to each firefighter by a fire department. Should a grant program be created as proposed, it should be conducted under the oversight of the agency having the regulatory authority in meeting NFPA standard 1971, Standard on Protective Ensembles for Structural Fire Fighting and Proximity Fire Fighting.

I will be happy to answer any questions committee members might have at this time.