

Good Morning Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren and Distinguished Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is William St. Michel, retired Fire Chief from the Town of Durham and the current Executive Director for Maine Fire Chiefs' Association

I would like to ask for your support of LD 1316, An Act To Provide Funding for the Maine Length of Service Award Program. LD 1316 would enable the LOSAP Board which was already established to start the process of setting up and initiating the Program. LD 1316 requests \$2,500,000 starting in fiscal year 21 – 22.

The volunteer fire service is struggling with recruitment and retention issues. It is imperative that this issue is addressed for the well-being of the communities and the citizens of the State of Maine. LOSAP is one of many pieces necessary to address the recruitment and retention issue in the volunteer fire service.

The 119<sup>th</sup> Legislature recognized the issue and the need to address recruitment and retention in the volunteer fire service, with the creation of the Fire Commission in 1999. Recruitment and Retention was one of the initial charges, "Recommendations for recruitment and retention of volunteers, including a length-of-service incentive program for volunteer firefighters." The 127<sup>th</sup> Legislature realized it was no longer just a need but urgent when they passed LD 164 which created the LOSAP Board in 2017. I sincerely hope that the 130<sup>th</sup> Legislature will pass and fund LD 1316 and establish the funding mechanism to start addressing this serious issue.

The Fire Service was struggling to recruit and retain members before the pandemic, as we emerge from the pandemic the struggle to recruit at a pace to keep up with age, departures and increased demand for services will intensify. As we move to address this increased demand the most effective way to ease the tension will be to have everything possible in place to improve retention.

I hope you will support LD 1316! Thank you for your time and your service.

William St. Michel  
Executive Director  
Maine Fire Chiefs' Association