

Testimony of Frederick Brewer, CPA

In Support of LD 1803, *An Act to Attract and Retain Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Personnel through the Maine Length of Service Award Program*
January 19, 2022

Good Morning Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and honorable members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Frederick Brewer, and I am the Governors Appointee to the Length of Service Award Program for the State of Maine. I was appointed to the LOSAP board because of my background as a CPA, my training and expertise working with municipalities and retirement plans & my life long experience as a fourth-generation volunteer firefighter on the Massasoit Engine Co. of Damariscotta. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of LD 1803, An Act To Attract and Retain Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Personnel through the Maine Length of Service Award Program. The original bill that established the program was passed under the 127th legislative session in 2015. We have actively been working toward funding this program since our board was organized. We were able to secure funding for the administrative costs in the last legislative session of \$500,000 and now have begun the process of getting this plan established and working with a Third Party Administrator for the program.

This bill is the product of an effort to address Maine's crisis to attract, retain, and support our volunteer first responders, which our communities are so reliant upon. This bill seeks to provide two things for Maine's LOSAP:

The first part of the funding will appropriate funds for the continued administrative costs of the program so that municipalities in Maine can contribute to the program for the benefit of their volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel.

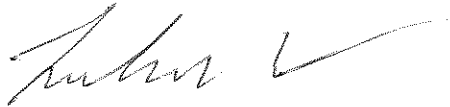
The second part of the funding is for a State contribution to the program. The State appropriation will fund contributions for firefighters and EMS personnel that meet the requirements to receive qualified service credit under LD 1797.

The board established the service award calculation so that first responders can accrue benefits for services that will benefit the communities they serve the most. The benefit of the state contribution is that we have set a floor of 30 points that the participant needs to earn. If they do not achieve the 30 points, then they will not receive a contribution from the State. The ceiling of the program is \$1,000 annually per participant. This enables departments to encourage additional participation from their membership by showing them how much service credit they have earned throughout the year.

The State contribution will benefit the more rural communities in Maine that do not pay their volunteers for their service. The rural departments are the ones that operate on smaller budgets that do not allow contributions to the LOSAP from their communities. Those communities are the ones struggling the most with the crisis that we face with staffing shortages. With the funding from the State we will encourage the smaller communities First Responders who are on the fringe and not participating as much to do more for their communities and in turn help alleviate some of the demands on the individuals that are going above and beyond throughout this crisis. It also becomes a marketing tool to help recruit new members as a benefit to joining. These two benefits will help to address the retention portion of the staffing crisis we currently face.

For the sake of the health and future of our volunteer first responders in Maine, and the communities that depend on them, I urge you to vote in favor of this bill. Maine has a proud legacy of volunteerism within the

First Responder Community. The challenges of current times and the resulting staffing crisis for the first responder community will be eased by showing appreciation for all their efforts and ensure that this legacy continues. I welcome any questions about the operation of the program and thank you for your service.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frederick Brewer', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Frederick Brewer