



Maine Municipal Association

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Support For

LD 516 - *An Act to Reduce Cancer Among Firefighters by Providing Grants for Safety Equipment*

March 27, 2023

Sen. Beebe-Center, Rep. Salisbury and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I providing testimony, in support of LD 516, *An Act to Reduce Cancer Among Firefighters by Providing Grants for Safety Equipment*, on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association, which represents the interests of municipal government before the Legislature. The positions of the Association are established by our 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC), who are elected by the councils and selectboards of municipalities in each of Maine's 35 Senate districts.

Cancer, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and cardiac health are recognized in established public policy as significant consistent threats facing individuals who serve their communities via public safety roles. Such roles are often filled by volunteers, part-time and full-time employees, and those risks exist regardless of the employment relationship, or local capacity to address the risks in all possible ways.

Maine has long benefitted from the willing service of volunteers, which has hidden the growing costs of that service in both fire and EMS services, and as a result, there are services that are struggling not only to attract new volunteers but also to shoulder the increasingly significant costs of providing appropriate gear for all individuals.

As drafted this bill suggests a grant program that would provide for significantly expensive and important systems, heavy duty washing machines for gear exposed to multiple chemicals during use, and diesel vehicle exhaust systems. Because many volunteer services are only able to purchase used fire equipment, both of these items could help mitigate the cancer risks posed that are increased by the use of used gear that cannot be provided in any other way.

That said, it is vital that the administrative procedures necessary to pursue the grants proposed by LD 516 also remain easily accessible for all services, many of which have no or very limited administrative support. While the rules for the program will be developed by the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission which includes volunteer services and fire associations, it remains vital that such rules are developed with the lowest reporting capacity in mind. Officials trust that the Commission will be best placed to understand this and appreciate this.

Additionally, officials ask that you make sure in the definitions of this program for eligibility, the term fire department references all services as established in 30-A §3151 and ask you to vote ought to pass on LD 516.