



Local Government Center 60 Community Drive Augusta, Maine 04330-9486

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and Distinguished Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

I am Chief Bill Gillespie from Liberty, Maine, and the Legislative Liaison for the Maine Fire Chiefs Association, representing more than 400 Fire Chiefs throughout the state. I am submitting this letter **Neither For Nor Against** of LD 1742 **An Act to Enhance the Use of Critical Incident Stress Management Teams and Require Per Team Support**.

We support every effort to protect the health and wellbeing of first responders. Behavioral health is an important part of taking care of all emergency personnel due to continued exposure to tragedy. Career, Volunteer, and Per Diem members of Fire and EMS services deserve continual support.

One concern we have with this Legislation is the requirement to provide a member to take this additional training and be prepared to assist their peers. Most Fire and EMS services are struggling to maintain their membership to simply respond to calls for service. This requirement can put undue stress on smaller departments and volunteer departments to achieve. An alternative to this requirement would be to develop county wide programs to assist departments that do not have availability for this.

The Maine Fire Chiefs and the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission which has representatives from all branches of the Fire and EMS services would gladly entertain a seat at the table in developing a program that would not put any undue strain on our weakened emergency services.

Respectfully,

Chief William Gillespie

Legislative Liaison