

**Testimony in Support
of
LD 213, An Act To Require Coverage for Female Firefighters Facing Reproductive System
Cancer**

**Senator Cathy Breen
February 17, 2021**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Sylvester, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, my name is Cathy Breen. I represent Maine Senate District 25, which includes the communities of Chebeague Island, Cumberland, Falmouth, Gray, Long Island, Yarmouth, and about half of the City of Westbrook. I am submitting this testimony in support of **LD 213, An Act To Require Coverage for Female Firefighters Facing Reproductive System Cancer.**

For over a decade, Maine has assumed that firefighters who contract cancer do so in the line of duty. After all, regular exposure to both the toxic chemicals and gasses found in fire smoke and the carcinogens contained in foam fire suppressant are part of the job. It is not surprising that cancer is among the leading causes of death and disability for firefighters.

This bill recognizes that roughly seven percent of Maine's firefighters are female, and that the statute protecting firefighters and allowing them to claim disability benefits must be expanded to cover these brave women. LD 213 simply adds "gynecological cancer" to the list of cancers that it is rightfully assumed are caused by fighting fires.

I don't need to tell you about the bravery and integrity required to be willing to risk one's life every day and run into danger while others are running from it. It is only right that we in the Legislature make sure that we consider every detail when it comes to supporting and protecting these heroes. This bill simply asks that we recognize that the risk to women is at least as significant as the risk to men. I ask you to support LD 213 and I am happy to answer any questions.