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***Testimony of Rep. Rebecca Millett presenting
LD 213, An Act to Require Coverage for Female Firefighters Facing Reproductive System
Cancer
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing***

Good morning Senator Rafferty, Representative Sylvester, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing, I am State Representative Rebecca Millett, and I represent District 30, the community of Cape Elizabeth, in the Maine House of Representatives

I can't emphasize enough how strongly I feel about the merits of LD 213, "An Act To Require Coverage for Female Firefighters Facing Reproductive System Cancer," and am grateful that I am presenting this testimony before you today.

Firefighters tend to their communities during the most trying times. Whether it is a medical event, a house fire or a vehicular accident, it is these women and men that risk their lives every day, putting the safety of others before themselves. They save the lives of Mainers like us. But, the glaring reality is that firefighters, both women and men alike, can face dire medical consequences as a result of their work. Yet there's an inequity in how medical issues, specifically reproductive cancers, are covered for men as compared to women. Clearly, in 2021, it's time to make this right.

The bill before you is about basic equality. By incorporating gynecologic coverage for females, it would allow for Maine female firefighters to get coverage that is comparable to their male colleagues, which they rightly deserve.

The Maine Workers' Compensation Act of 1992 failed to include gynecologic cancer as a condition that can be attributed to the work of women firefighters. The act, while including an extensive list of other conditions, such as kidney cancer, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, prostate cancer and testicular cancer, neglects to address one of the most essential elements of women firefighters' health.

“Firefighters are six times more likely than the general population to be diagnosed with cancer”, said Craig Macdonald of the Alberta Fire Fighters Association after the Alberta government added ovarian and cervical cancer to their coverage.¹ (All Canadian provinces cover gynecologic cancer.) This statistic is sobering, and even with this knowledge, the women and men that sacrifice their own lives each and every day to protect our communities continue their hazardous work. It is only fair that women, exposed to the same dangerous and cancer-causing chemicals as their male co-workers, receive coverage for gynecologic cancers as well.

It is true that “[w]omen make up less than 10 percent of firefighters across the nation. However, as departments continue to diversify, it is important to understand the extent of chemical exposures in the workplace and to explore tangible ways to protect the health of women.” In addition to this, “adding female reproductive cancers to the benefit eligibility will strengthen the diversity of the profession.”² Treating female firefighters equitably will fortify their role in our firefighter workforce, thus enhancing the safety of our state. In the past, firefighting was a male-dominated profession, however, times are changing, and we need to change with them, hence the exigency of LD 213.

States across the nation have already implemented this coverage. Iowa, for example, offers firefighters coverage for ovarian cancer, cervical cancer, uterine cancers, among other diagnoses. Wisconsin covers many types of cancers as well and specifically states that among the cancers covered, “reproductive systems” are vital. I have included a list of states that have incorporated this change to their laws. It is critical that Maine follows in the footsteps of forward-thinking states taking action and achieving this equity in coverage. It is now our time as a state to show our support for our heroes - women and men just the same.

LD 213, “An Act to Require Coverage for Female Firefighters Facing Reproductive System Cancer” would:

- Strengthen the Maine Worker’s Compensation Act of 1992 by **adding gynecological cancer** to the list of diseases with required coverage for Maine firefighters.
- Provide firefighters the assurance that **their needs will be covered**
- Resolve **the gender inequality** of coverage among Maine’s firefighters

We women and men alike must abolish this inequity regarding reproductive cancer coverage in female firefighters and continue to fight for these heroes as they do for us.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to working with you to pass this vital piece of legislation bill into law.

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<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/alberta-firefighters-cancer-compensation-workers-ovarian-cervical-testicular-1.4495420>

² Understanding Cancer in Women Firefighters”, Heather Buren, Firehouse, 12/1/20

Female Cancer Coverage In States

Below is a chart states that offer presumptive coverage for female specific cancers. While breast cancer can occur in both men and women, it is most common amongst females, therefore it was included. Some state language to do specify cancers by type and just generically cover “cancer” based on other definitions. Because this language could include female cancers, those states are also included in the chart and marked as such. The cancer language for each state is listed below the chart.

STATE	Cancers not defined	Breast Cancer	Cervical Cancer	Uterine Cancer	Ovarian Cancer	Reproductive Tract Cancer
Alabama (AL)	X					
California (CA)	X					
Florida (FL)		X	X		X	
Georgia (GA)		X	X			
Idaho (ID)		X				
Illinois (IL)	X					
Indiana (IN)	X					
Iowa (IA)		X	X	X	X	
Kansas (KS)	X					
Louisiana (LA)						X
Maine (ME)		X				
Maryland (MD)		X				
Minnesota (MN)	X					
Mississippi (MS)		X				X
Missouri (MO)		X				
Montana (MT)		X				
Nevada (NV)		X		X	X	
New Hampshire (NH)	X					
New Jersey (NJ)	X					
New Mexico (NM)		X				
New York (NY)		X				X
North Dakota (ND)	X					
Ohio (OH)	X					
Oklahoma (OK)	X					
Oregon (OR)		X				
Pennsylvania (PA)	X					
Rhode Island (RI)	X					
South Carolina (SC)		X				
South Dakota (SD)	X					
Virginia (VA)		X			X	
Wisconsin (WI)		X				X

Wyoming (WY)	X					
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Language in laws for cancer coverage:

AL- "Cancer which manifests itself... during the period in which the fire fighter is in the service of the city, provided the fire fighter demonstrates that he or she was exposed... to a known carcinogen which is reasonably linked to the disabling cancer, and shall be presumed to arise out of and in the course of the fire fighter's employment."

CA- "cancer, including leukemia...to a known carcinogen as defined by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, or as defined by the director"

FL- "bladder cancer; brain cancer; **breast cancer; cervical cancer;** colon cancer; esophageal cancer; invasive skin cancer; kidney cancer; large intestinal cancer; lung cancer; malignant melanoma; mesothelioma; multiple myeloma; non-Hodgkin's lymphoma; oral cavity and pharynx cancer; **ovarian cancer;** prostate cancer; rectal cancer; stomach cancer; testicular cancer; thyroid cancer"

GA- "bladder, blood, brain, **breast, cervical,** esophageal, intestinal, kidney, lymphatic, lung, prostate, rectum, respiratory tract, skin, testicular, and thyroid cancer: leukemia; multiple myeloma; or non-Hodgkin's lymphoma"

ID- "brain cancer after 10 years; bladder cancer after 12 years; kidney cancer after 15 years; colorectal cancer after 10 years; non-Hodgkin's lymphoma after 15 years; leukemia after 5 years; mesothelioma after 10 years; testicular cancer after 5 years; **breast cancer after 5 years;** esophageal cancer after 10 years; multiple myeloma after 15 years"

IL- "... disabling cancer, which develops or manifests itself during a period while the fire fighter is in the service of the fire department... the type of cancer involved must be a type which may be caused by exposure to heat, radiation or a known carcinogen as defined by the International Agency for Research on Cancer..."

IN- "...cancer that is caused by a known carcinogen to which an individual is at risk for occupational exposure... carcinogen is recognized by the International Agency for Research on Cancer; or the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health..."

IA- "prostate cancer, primary brain cancer, **breast cancer, ovarian cancer, cervical cancer, uterine cancer,** malignant melanoma, leukemia, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, bladder cancer, colorectal cancer, multiple myeloma, testicular cancer, and kidney cancer"

KS- "...type of cancer which may, in general, result from exposure to heat, radiation or a known carcinogen..."

LA- "... limited to the types of cancer which may be caused by exposure to heat, smoke, radiation, or a known suspected carcinogen as defined by the International Agency for Research on Cancer...limited to cancer originated in the bladder, brain, colon, liver, pancreas, skin, kidney, or gastrointestinal or **reproductive tract,** and leukemia, lymphoma, multiple myeloma, prostate, and testicular cancer, or any other type of cancer for which fire fighters are determined to have statistically significant increased risk over that of the general population..."

ME- "cancer affecting the skin or the central nervous, lymphatic, digestive, hematological, urinary, skeletal, oral, **breast,** testicular, genitourinary, liver, or prostate systems or that may result from exposure to heat, radiation, to a known or suspected carcinogen"

MD- "leukemia or prostate, rectal, throat, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, brain, testicular, or **breast cancer** that is caused by contact with a toxic substance that the individual has encountered in the line of duty"

MN- "... disabling cancer of a type caused by exposure to heat, radiation, or a known or suspected carcinogen, as defined by the International Agency for Research on Cancer..."

MS- "...limited to cancer affecting the bladder, brain, colon, liver, pancreas, skin, kidney, gastrointestinal tract, **reproductive tract,** leukemia, lymphoma, multiple myeloma, prostate, testicles and **breast**"

MO- "...cancer affecting the skin or the central nervous, lymphatic, digestive, hematological, urinary, skeletal, oral, **breast,** testicular, genitourinary, liver or prostate systems, as well as any condition of cancer which may result from

exposure to heat or radiation or to a known or suspected carcinogen as determined by the International Agency for Research on Cancer”

MT- “bladder cancer after 12 years; brain cancer of any type after 10 years; **breast cancer after 5 years**; colorectal cancer after 10 years; esophageal cancer after 10 years; kidney cancer after 15 years; leukemia after 5 years; mesothelioma after 10 years; multiple myeloma after 15 years; non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma after 15 years; and lung cancer after 4 years”

NV- “...bladder cancer...brain cancer...**breast cancer**...colon cancer...esophageal cancer...Hodgkin’s lymphoma...kidney cancer...leukemia...liver cancer...lung cancer...lymphatic or haematopoietic cancer...basal cell carcinoma...squamous cell carcinoma...malignant melanoma...multiple myeloma...nasopharyngeal cancer, including laryngeal cancer and pharyngeal cancer...non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma...**ovarian cancer**...pancreatic cancer...prostate cancer...rectal cancer...soft tissue sarcoma...stomach cancer...testicular cancer...thyroid cancer...ureteral cancer...**uterine cancer**...”

NH- “...type of cancer involved must be a type which may be caused by exposure to heat, radiation, or a known carcinogen, as defined by the International Agency for Research on Cancer”

NJ- “... the type of cancer involved shall be a type which may be caused by exposure to heat, radiation, or a known or suspected carcinogen as defined by the International Agency for Research on Cancer...”

NM- “...brain cancer after 10 years; bladder cancer after 12 years; kidney cancer after 15 years; colorectal cancer after 10 years; non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma after 15 years; leukemia after 5 years; ureter cancer after 12 years; testicular cancer after 5 years; **breast cancer after 5 years**; esophageal cancer after 10 years; multiple myeloma after 15 years...”

NY- “...melanoma or condition of cancer affecting the lymphatic, digestive, hematological, urinary, neurological, **breast, reproductive** or prostate systems...”

ND- “...an occupational cancer is one which arises out of employment as a full time paid fire fighter and is due to injury due to exposure to smoke, fumes, or carcinogenic, poisonous, toxic, or chemical substances while in the performance of active duty as a full time paid fire fighter...”

OH- “...cancer that was contracted in the course of and arising out of the fire fighter’s employment in the fire fighter was exposed to an agent classified by the international agency for research on cancer or its successor organization as a group 1 or 2A carcinogen”

OK- “...existence of any cancer...”

OR- “brain cancer, colon cancer, stomach cancer, testicular cancer, prostate cancer, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, cancer of the throat or mouth, rectal cancer, **breast cancer** or leukemia”

PA- “...cancer suffered by a fire fighter which is caused by exposure to a known carcinogen which is recognized as a Group 1 carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer”

RI- “...disabling occupational cancer which develops or manifests itself during a period while the fire fighter is in the service of the department...”

SC- “Cancer includes malignant neoplasms of the following body areas and organs systems: central and peripheral nervous system; oropharyngeal; respiratory tract; gastrointestinal tract; hepatobiliary; solid organ and endocrine; genitourinary and male reproductive; GYN; skin, soft tissue, and **breast**; and bone and bold”

SD- “...impairment caused by cancer...”

VA- “leukemia or pancreatic, prostate, rectal, throat, **ovarian or breast cancer**...”

WI- “...cancers affecting the skin, **breasts**, central nervous system or lymphatic, digestive, hematological, urinary, skeletal, oral, or **reproductive systems**...”

WY- “cancer, lymphoma or leukemia that may be caused by exposure to heat, smoke, radiation or a known or suspected carcinogen as determined by the International Agency for Research on Cancer”