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To Senator Rafferty, Representative Sylvester, and esteemed members of the Labor and Housing Committee:

My name is Melanie Sachs and I represent District 48, which includes Freeport and part of Pownal. I am submitting testimony in strong support of LD 213, “An Act To Require Coverage for Female Firefighters Facing Reproductive System Cancer.”

When then Senate Majority Leader Phil Bartlett introduced his bipartisan bill, LD 621, “An Act Allowing Worker’s Compensation Benefits for Firefighters who Contract Cancer” during the 124th Legislature, he noted that “Firefighters face an increased risk of cancer. Their occupational exposure to a wide range of cancer-causing chemicals contributes to this elevated risk”. He further added that “Firefighters put their personal health and safety on the line every day they are on the job in order to keep us safe. They have earned the support this bill provides.” This risk, commitment, and sacrifice holds true no matter the gender of the firefighter.

The [2018 report](#) by the National Fire Protection Agency indicates that women represent 8% of all career and volunteer firefighters- an increase of 3% since 2015. A [presentation](#) by University of Miami researcher, Dr. Natasha Schaefer Solle, at the November 17, 2020, Women in Fire conference found in her pilot study that female firefighters in Florida face five times the risk of cervical cancer compared to female non-firefighters. At that same conference, Dr. Kenneth Kunz of British Columbia reported on his [2019 International Survey of Cancer Incidence among Female Firefighters](#). His team collected data from over 1300 firefighters in 12 different countries, which he reports is the largest cancer dataset to date for this population. A startling 19% of the female firefighters reported a diagnosis of cancer or pre-cancer, with the top two categories being breast cancer (21%) and cervical cancer (18%). Congress authorized the CDC to institute a [National Firefighter Registry](#), beginning in 2021, in part because women and minority firefighters have been underrepresented in the research, and recognize the urgency of the risk.

In reviewing the testimony from the 124th, it is clear the intent of LD 621 was to recognize risks involved for those who choose to serve as firefighters, and to create comprehensive categories of coverage. Presumptive coverage for cancer involving the female reproductive system should have been included at that time, as it is in other states, and as is indicated by the research. It is an oversight that you, and this Legislature can remedy.

I urge you to join me in supporting LD 213.