

TESTIMONY OF JEFF MCCABE, DIRECTOR OF POLITICS & LEGISLATION MSEA/SEIU, LOCAL 1989 BEFORE
THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND HOUSING

In Support of LD 305

**An Act To Include Forest Rangers and Forest Fire Prevention Specialists in the Bureau of Forestry's
Forest Protection Unit in the Laws Concerning Cancer Suffered by Firefighters**

February 22, 2021

Chair Rafferty, Chair Sylvester, members of the Committee on Labor and Housing; my name is Jeff McCabe, I am the Director of Politics & Legislation for The Maine Service Employees Association Service Employees International Union, Local 1989 (MSEA-SEIU, Local 1989). Maine Service Employees Association is a labor union that represents approximately 13,000 workers and retirees, mainly in the public sector, statewide.

I am here in support LD 305. This bill adds forest rangers and forest fire prevention specialists in the forest protection unit within the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Forestry who have contracted cancer to the list of firefighters under the workers' compensation laws whose cancer is presumed to be caused by their firefighting duties.

I have long thought that the individuals doing this important work on behalf of our great state do not get the recognition they deserve and at times the support they need. These individuals pride themselves on modernizing technology, keeping well trained and being well networked with those in other states doing the same type of work. It has seemed to me that while many advances have been made in this line of work around training and technology a few things remain the same; this work is dangerous and very physically demanding. It also exposes these individuals to harmful chemicals and particulate matter. It is also important to remember that these folks deal with things burning that are not found in just the natural world. The line between forest and civilization is not clearly defined in this work.

As you think about this bill it might even generate images of someone fighting a forest fire wearing only a bandana over their nose and mouth while wearing bright yellow shirt. I would suggest you take that image beyond that in your mind and picture that same bandana clad individual fighting a fire at a hunting camp, lakeside summer cottage or even subdivision of new homes on a forested hillside. Protecting lives and property all while wearing just a bandanna type covering.

I am happy to bring more information back to the committee if you have questions. I have included additional information below as I think you will see the science clearly supports the bill today and you may see other aspects that will be helpful to understand the important work these individuals do. We urge this Committee to make sure those who serve and protect our state in the forest service are protected equally under the law as other firefighters. Please vote ought to pass on LD 305. Thank you.

Study shows firefighters' exposure to smoke increases disease risk

<https://wildfiretoday.com/2018/02/06/study-shows-firefighters-exposure-smoke-increases-disease-risk/>

Wildland firefighter smoke exposure and risk of lung cancer and cardiovascular disease mortality

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S001393511930194X>

Reference Publication Oregon OSHA: <https://osha.oregon.gov/OSHAPubs/hazard/2993-33.pdf>