



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE PLANING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HOUSE BILL 5507 – AN ACT CONCERNING THE APPOINTMENT OF ZONING ENFORCEMENT
OFFICIALS, BUILDING OFFICIALS AND FIRE MARSHALS**

The Connecticut Fire Marshals Association (CFMA) opposes House Bill 5507– AAC the Appointment of Zoning Enforcement Officials, Building Officials and Fire Marshals. Our concern with this bill is in Section 3, which deals specifically with Section 29-297 of the general statutes. The State of Connecticut has 169 municipalities and a little over 200 fire marshals due to some municipalities having one or more incorporated fire districts within the municipality. Current law states that a local fire marshal serves until removed for cause. The bill before us today looks to eliminate that language.

The language “shall serve until removed for cause” is vitally important to us as fire marshals. It allows us protection from political pressures that are exerted upon us each and every day. Without this language a local fire marshal can potentially be subjected to allowing unsafe conditions from being corrected simply because of political influence. For example, a local fire marshal conducts an inspection of a child day care facility and that facility is required to have a functioning fire alarm system that is serviced yearly and the local fire marshal discovers that the system is not working and orders it repaired but the owner of the day care facility is the mayor’s sister and does not want to spend the money on the repairs. The local fire marshal gets called into the mayor’s office and told to forget about the fire alarm system because it is going to cost too much money to repair and it will put the day care out-of-business, and the fire marshal should just sign off that the facility meets code. Without the statutory language in place that protects a local fire marshal from this type of pressure, a fire marshal fearful of losing his or her job may sign-off on the approval without a working fire alarm system in the building, putting the lives of each and every person in that building in danger.

In addition, each and every local fire marshal works under different conditions. It depends on home rule, but some are volunteer, some part-time paid, some full-time paid, and some work directly for a town or city while others work within a municipal fire department. You must also take into account the individual employment rules that we all work under; many of us also work under a collective bargaining agreement within our respective municipalities.

As fire marshals we all took an oath of office to serve and faithfully protect the citizens of our respective jurisdictions. Our most important job is to ensure that each and every building regulated by the fire code is safe from the effects of fire or similar emergencies. Furthermore, there is already a mechanism in place to terminate a fire marshal/deputy fire marshal through decertification or if the person does not comply with the Connecticut General Statutes. Fire marshal must be allowed to do his or her job unencumbered by political pressures.

Respectfully,

John Yacovino

John Yacovino, President
Connecticut Fire Marshals Association

203-537-1329

jyacovino@meridenct.gov