

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing in support of continued funding for Regional Fire Training Schools in Connecticut.

As a volunteer firefighter for over 40 years, past department training officer and past chief of the Orange Volunteer Fire Department, I have experienced the critical advantage that regional schools provide. Firefighting is an increasingly complex job where new knowledge and skills must be continuously obtained. If this level of training is to be received by the many volunteer firefighters who serve the citizens of this state, it must be provided in a manner that is effective and convenient. Regional fire schools have proven to be the best vehicle to accomplish this objective. Volunteer firefighters are already time-strapped with work and family responsibilities. Without the regional fire training school, these firefighters will now assume an additional burden of having to travel a greater distance to get the needed training. The other choice is to not get the training, which jeopardizes public safety, and, in my view, is unacceptable.

It is equally unacceptable for volunteer departments that already work hard to raise funds for equipment to be expected to now pay additional dollars to train members. Most departments in the state are volunteer, which saves untold sums of money. Volunteer firefighting should be seen as a partnership where the state and localities derive the benefits of persons doing public safety work without pay and the state providing necessary support. It is a mutually beneficial arrangement, but it will be undermined if both parties do not perform their roles.

The regional fire schools and volunteer fire departments need state funding to continue public safety service to the citizens. This model has proven value and I strongly urge that it be supported with state funds.

Thank you.

Charles Sherwood
Orange, Connecticut