



**New Fairfield Volunteer Fire Department**  
P.O. Box 8307  
New Fairfield, Connecticut 06812

**Testimony Presented in Favor of Proposed Bill No. 5879**  
**An Act Increasing the Maximum Amount of Property Tax Abatement for Local Volunteer**  
**Emergency Service Personnel**  
**By Chief Bruce Taylor of the New Fairfield Volunteer Fire Department**

**Planning and Development Committee Public Hearing**  
**Friday, March 6, 2015**

Senator Osten, Representative Miller, Senator Linares, Representative Aman and the members of the Planning and Development Committee, we appreciate the opportunity to present testimony in support of Proposed Bill No. 5879 on behalf of the sixty plus volunteers who together make up the New Fairfield Volunteer Fire Department.

In 2000 the Town of New Fairfield adopted a local ordinance pursuant to P.A. 99-272 that allows our members to receive a credit on their local property tax bill ranging from \$200 to \$1,000 depending on their years of service with the Department. Members must maintain an active status to remain eligible for the program. As hoped at its passage, the ordinance has helped recruit new members and retain active members to our volunteer fire department. It is an essential tool in our toolkit of member incentives needed to attract and maintain an all-volunteer emergency service in this day and age. HB 5879 helps to improve this important recruitment and retention tool, and thus we support it.

A few years after passage of our local ordinance, the maximum tax credit was effectively cut from the \$1,000 allowed in the ordinance when the Internal Revenue Service decided that this tax credit had to be reported for each of us on a 1099 as taxable income every year. HB 5879, while still providing taxable income, would help return the tax credit closer to its initially intended \$1,000 maximum actual benefit. We support that and hope you will as well.

We understand that this proposed legislation would only pave the way for our municipality to amend its existing ordinance and increase the maximum tax credit available to our members from \$1,000 to \$1,250. Based on our calculations, this would cost our Town less than \$10,000 per year, and would produce a great return on investment for the value the Town receives from our volunteer fire and EMS services each year.

Thank you for the opportunity to support HB 5879. We urge your support and that of the entire General Assembly in enacting this legislation.