

STATEMENT BY DAVID P. GALLITTO, CHAIRMAN

Board of Fire Commissioners

South Fire District of The City of Middletown

TO

COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ON

FEBRUARY 13, 2014

RE: PROPOSED SB-799

My name is David P. Gallitto. I am the Chairman of the Board of Fire Commissioners of the South Fire District of the City of Middletown, the governing body and taxing authority for the Fire District. South Fire provides fire and all hazard rescue services to half of the City of Middletown, including the campus of Connecticut Valley Hospital. South Fire also holds the EMS First Responder Certificate for the area it serves.

I am here today on behalf of district taxpayers to urge your approval of SB -799, an ACT CONCERNING THE SOUTH FIRE DISTRICT OF MIDDLETOWN. This legislation is the latest attempt by the South Fire District to get the State of Connecticut to recognize the burden placed on district taxpayers as a result of our providing Fire/Rescue and EMS services to the CVH campus.

Dating back as far as 1998, South Fire has responded to calls on the CVH campus, originally on automatic aid to the hospital's volunteer fire department. The automatic aid plan was implemented, at the request of CVH, following a fire at Dutcher Hall where only two CVH volunteers responded.

By 2001, with the number of responses to the CVH campus increasing, my predecessors on the Board of Fire Commissioners began looking for a mechanism to get some funding from the state. They sought

and were denied PILOT monies. But in a letter stating that PILOT funds cannot be paid to Fire Districts, then Undersecretary of the Office of Policy and Management, Michael Cicchetti , recognized that a problem does exist, when he stated “the South Fire District is providing fire services to state facilities without reimbursement which places an unfair burden on the district”.

That “unfair burden” became greater in 2011 when the state eliminated the CVH Volunteer Fire Department. That changed our role from automatic aid responder to primary responder for all emergencies on the CVH campus. And I should point out that when the CVH Fire Department was shut down, its equipment was sold or given to other fire agencies but none of it made its way to the South Fire District.

As a full service fire/rescue/ems department, staffed by career firefighters, South Fire has and continues to provide excellent service to the CVH campus. But with responses to the CVH campus accounting for 22 percent of our total call volume, we believe the service contract called for in SB -799 will provide the mechanism for ending the “unfair burden” on district taxpayers.

I ask your support of this legislation.