



**CONNECTICUT STATE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION, INC.**  
**Education Committee**

Burrville Regional Fire School  
Eastern Connecticut Fire School  
Fairfield Regional Fire School

Hartford County Regional Fire School  
Middlesex County Fire School  
New Haven Regional Fire Academy

Stamford Regional Fire School  
Valley Fire Chiefs' Regional Fire School  
Wolcott State Regional Fire School

**State of Connecticut – General Assembly**  
**Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations**  
**Comments on proposed budget (H.B. #5044)**  
February 9, 2016

Dear Committee members,

Regional Fire Schools have been delivering training to fire departments in Connecticut since as early as the 1940's. The regional concept was adopted by various fire service organizations, independently through the 1940's and 1950's. These schools are designed to be responsive to the needs of each region. The objectives include offering quality, standardized training to area municipal fire departments at reasonable costs.

In 1972 the Connecticut House and Senate advanced a Special Legislative Act which was designed to provide grants in aid to the state's Regional Fire Schools. Governor Meskill (R) subsequently signed that bill into law.

During the period following this bill's passage, and until the Malloy administration, governors Grasso (D), O'Neill (D), Weicker (ACP), Rowland (R), and Reil (R), all supported this initiative and indeed, the funding levels have been increased several times. This Grant Funding has proven critical in order to provide Multi-Disciplinary, Multi-Agency, Multi-Jurisdictional training to First Responders. This training has included Fire Service personnel, Emergency Managers, Public Health officials, Public Works personnel and related agencies. The availability of this funding source has helped to contain the ever rising costs of this training. Also utilizing these training facilities are the State Fire Marshal's office and State and local police departments, in addition to other emergency service agencies.

In the proposed budget documents for the "DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION" the Budget Summary states that the "AGENCY PURPOSE" includes To reduce death, injury and property damage due to fire, emergencies and other disasters by increasing the proficiency of fire service personnel. The document continues to make "RECOMMENDED ADJUSTMENTS" that will ...Eliminate General Fund Grants for Fire Training Schools.... It is inconceivable that we will better prepare local firefighters to appropriately respond to area emergencies by eliminating all state funding for these regional fire schools. This elimination of state funding will place another requirement to "make up" this funding level to every city and town in Connecticut as they struggle to provide local fire and emergency services in their communities.

The proposal by Governor Malloy's administration to eliminate this funding will have an incalculable impact on training of our Firefighters and other first responders. In order to transfer all regional fire school operations costs to class delivery costs paid by user fees, the resulting cost of a Firefighter certification program will increase by between 300 and 400 percent. This resulting cost increase, without preparation or warning, will result in municipal fire departments needing to pay a regional fire school course fees for a Firefighter I training, now costing \$850 will, instead cost between \$2,000 and \$2,700 per recruit candidate for this same training. There are only two funding sources currently available, the grants in aid and the per student tuition. Regional fire schools are left no alternatives. Each municipal fire department will need to decide whether to pay the student fees and support their regional fire school or to shop for a lower cost for training programs. Several issues will be determined based upon their decisions.

There is a cost associated with compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations. Advantages of utilization of the existing regional fire school structure include:

1. Regional fire schools strive to provide administrative oversight to assure that a quality education is provided at a competitive cost to the various user groups.
2. Regional fire schools provide for significant liability insurance in order to protect students, instructors, and the user groups in the event of injury.
3. Regional fire schools provide Workers Compensation Insurance consistent with requirements of the Connecticut Department of Labor.
4. Regional fire schools provide for earning withholdings for employees (instructors) consistent with requirements of the Connecticut Department of Revenue Services and the Internal Revenue Service.

The proposed elimination of regional fire school budgets, as proposed, will threaten the existence of these vital Regional Fire Training Centers and thus plummet operations of local fire departments back into efficiency levels of the 1940's prior to their existence. Please restore this funding that is vital to public safety from fire in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alan R. Hawkins". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Alan R. Hawkins, chairman