



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 Finance, Revenue and Bonding
Testimony in favor of Raised Bill #5594

March 9, 2016

Dear Committee members,

Regional Fire Schools have been delivering training to members of 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 organized in a way that makes them responsive to the needs of each region. Their objectives include offering quality, standardized training to area municipal fire departments at reasonable costs. These schools worked closely with the state Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and jointly developed a "Mission Delineation" document to define the roles and responsibilities of the various fire service training facilities in this state (adopted by the C.F.P.C. in January of 2003). That document assigns the regional fire schools the responsibility to conduct Firefighter I and Firefighter II certification training as their principle function.

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. Following the passage of that Special Legislative Act, governors Grasso (D), O'Neil (D), Weicker (ACP), Rowland (R), and Rell (R), all supported this initiative as necessary to provide for public safety. 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 for the fire departments that utilize these schools. 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.

Every year the general assembly and the directors of these regional fire schools grapple with the challenge to find adequate funding for the operational costs of these schools. As state financial liabilities continue to outpace available resources the method in which these schools have been receiving funding seems to be no longer viable. I wish to thank the Committee on Insurance and Real Estate for proposing this visionary solution to a long term funding dilemma.

The Education Committee urges you to support Bill #5594. This bill will establish a "Connecticut Fire Safety Fund". The primary intent of this bill is to provide an adequate and stable funding source in order to operate the established regional fire schools in the state. If this bill passes it will reduce the demand for general fund dollars from the state, provide an alternate funding source for municipalities, and allocate funds from insurance policy payments to train firefighters and provide for the potential to save these same companies significantly through the improved efficiencies of better trained firefighters.

Respectfully,

Alan R. Hawkins, chairman