



**Atwood Hose Fire Company
24 Wauregan Road
Wauregan, CT**

Serving the Citizens of Wauregan Since 1896

March 8, 2016

**Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3700
Hartford, CT 06106**

Distinguished Committee Members,

As the Chief of the Atwood Hose Fire Company, a volunteer fire organization protecting the citizens of the Village of Wauregan (Town of Plainfield, CT) and the surrounding area, I am writing to express my concern regarding the funding of the state's regional fire schools in this year's proposed budget (HB # 5594).

These long-standing schools serve as the main source of fire and rescue training for the state's volunteer fire service. Over the decades these schools have been in existence, thousands of fire fighters have been trained in basic and advanced skills that had helped save millions of dollars of property and countless lives. To completely eliminate or severely reduce funding to these schools is not only an insult to the state's fire service but would have a detrimental impact on the future of the fire service in the state for years to come.

The cost of fire training is one of the costliest items in a volunteer fire department's budget. Workplace safety regulations such as those from CONN-OSHA, and fire/rescue training standards such as those from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) require that fire fighters obtain certain levels of training and certification before working on an emergency scene. The regional fire schools provide this training to the majority of the state's fire service at a moderate cost per student. If the state funding is eliminated, the cost per student would be increased exponentially, reducing the number of fire fighters that smaller departments could afford to train. In turn this would also reduce the already small fire fighting forces of many small volunteer fire departments throughout the state.

While the State Fire Academy provides many training options as well, many fire departments prefer to use the regional schools for the long-term training classes (i.e.: Fire Fighter I and II) classes. The shorter travel distances offered by a regional approach is a much better option for these departments. Besides the State's Academy no long provides the Fire Fighter I and II classes, only the certification testing at the end of the class. In many parts of Connecticut, the regional schools are the only option for this certification training.

Please give serious consideration to funding the regional fire schools in the upcoming budget cycle. This funding offers quite a return on the dollar if you consider the citizens volunteering their time each day to provide fire, rescue and EMS services in the state for little of no compensation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "RFD", with a long horizontal line extending to the right and a small loop at the end.

**Chief Robert F Duval
Atwood Hose Fire Company
Wauregan, CT**