

UNIFORMED PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT

AFFILIATED WITH INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

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Good afternoon, Honorable Chairmen Rep. Terzcyak and Sen. Gomes, members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, my name is Richard Hart. I represent the Uniformed Professional Firefighters Association of Connecticut which represents 57 Local affiliates of the International Association of Firefighters. Membership in the UPPFA is comprised of approximately 4,000 Union firefighters in Connecticut.

I am speaking today in support of H.B.5262, AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR CURRENT AND FORMER UNIFORMED MEMBERS OF PAID OR VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS..

The dangers of the "job" are well documented, the drone of the bagpipes at a hero's funeral, the long blue lines, the apparatus caisson carrying the hero to his final resting place, giving his life so others may live, also, well documented. But what about the silent killer, hiding, stalking, biding its time in the shadows? There isn't a family in the United States that has not felt the cold touch of cancer. The same is true for the family that is the Fire Service. The toxic atmosphere that we work in on a daily basis holds hidden poisons ready to attack our bodies, long after the fire is out.

You will hear testimony from a firefighter recovering from his battle with cancer, one currently battling for his life. There is no need for me to be to be repetitive. As is well known in this building talks are ongoing to come to a consensus between the firefighters and CCM. We appreciate the gravity of that, but this bill must move forward to provide firefighters and their families the protection and security they so desperately deserve. The science has been agreed upon, the NIOSH study from 2013 is clear in its findings that firefighters are at a greater risk of being diagnosed with cancer. The International Agency on Research in Cancer is close to classifying firefighting as a carcinogenic occupation.

Based upon an actuarial report conducted by the International Association of Firefighters from states with cancer covered under workers' compensation, Connecticut would experience 1.36 career

firefighter cancer claims per year, or .034% of all career firefighters. It is proven that the key to reducing costs with cancer is prevention, early detection, prescreening and diagnostic testing, and prohibiting tobacco use. This bill does that along the same lines as the State's Health Enhancement Program. The argument that this bill will bankrupt cities and towns is completely false and unsubstantiated. Cancer in the fire service is real. The science supports the desperate need for cancer to be recognized and covered as a presumptive occupational injury in Connecticut, thus covered under Workers' Compensation. By passing this legislation, you not only will do what is right, but you will absolutely have saved an unknown number of firefighter lives

Please support H.B. 5262

Richard Hart

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