

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

My name is Daniel Huften and currently reside in Torrington. I am here to support bill# 5262, AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR CURRENT AND FORMER UNIFORMED MEMBERS OF PAID OR VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS.

Roughly one year ago you heard my testimony regarding HB #5871. My testimony was read by Representative Cook, due to the fact I was incapacitated with complications from a recent cancer surgery. Six months after ending my 21 year career with the fire service, I was diagnosed with Stage 3 colorectal cancer. I am happy to announce that as of today I am cancer free and in remission.

It is with both promise and frustration that I testify in front of you today. As a state director for an internationally recognized firefighter cancer foundation, I am all too aware of the cancer epidemic in the fire service. The simple fact that there are several similar organizations, with some fire departments even having their own, speaks volumes. These non profit organizations are immersed with fighting this battle that has taken too many lives of our fellow firefighters. I have heard too many stories of brother firefighter's losing their family homes due to the financial impacts only to leave their families homeless after succumbing to cancer. This is inexcusable.

Last session most of our efforts centered around educating our legislators regarding this cancer epidemic. You not only heard from firefighters and lobbyists, but most importantly you heard expert unbiased testimony substantiating our claims. Yet, here we are once again.

Two thirds of our fellow states have presumptive cancer language protecting emergency workers. I find it hard to believe that they are erroneous with their legislation.

I would like to read a quote from the testimony that I provided last year. "As we unveil this white cancer elephant in the fire service, I realize that some will unveil their own animal analogy, most likely the anemic piggy bank". We knew in our hearts that this was going to come down to who foots the bill. There is a very popular book, that implores that we must be our brother's keeper. I can say in full confidence that our men and women who always respond in your time of need are holding up their end of the bargain. There is no denying the overwhelming evidence, that only continues to grow, that this must be addressed immediately beginning with the passage of this bill. It's an unsettling feeling that as firefighters, we have a monetary hologram over our head dictating what benefits we should or should not receive, for putting our lives on the line every day to protect the citizens of this state.

I am so grateful and humbled to be able to sit in front of you today and deliver my testimony as my story could have ended very differently, resulting in being just another statistic. I believe it is our duty to leave things better than we found them. Thus I humbly and passionately ask that you support HB #5262. Thank you and may GOD Bless.

Daniel Huften
Retired Waterbury Firefighter and cancer survivor