

UNIFORMED PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT

AFFILIATED WITH INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

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Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B.141 AAC WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE FOR CURRENT AND FORMER MEMBERS OF PAID MUNICIPAL OR VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Good afternoon, Honorable Chairwomen Rep. Porter and Sen. Kushner, members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, my name is Richard Hart. I represent the Uniformed Professional Firefighters Association of Connecticut which represent 60 Local affiliates of the International Association of Firefighters. Membership in the UPFFA is comprised of approximately 4,000 Union firefighters in Connecticut.

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 have heard testimony from a widow who lost her firefighter husband to cancer, the esteemed Dr. Philip Landrigan, the preeminent authority on Occupational and Environmental medicine from Mt Sinai Hospital, New York and author of Occupational Cancers in New York City Firefighters which details the science and facts supporting the inextricable link of firefighting to cancer. You heard testimony from a firefighter cancer survivor.

The landmark 2013 NIOSH report- Mortality and cancer incidence in a pooled cohort of US firefighters from San Francisco, Chicago and Philadelphia (1950-2009), coupled with Dr. Landrigan’s research support each other in the fact that firefighters are more susceptible to various cancers than the general population:

- Testicular cancer (2.02 times greater risk)
- Multiple myeloma (1.53 times greater risk)
- Non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma (1.51 times greater risk)

- Skin cancer (1.39 times greater risk)
- Prostate cancer (1.28 times greater risk)
- Malignant melanoma (1.31 times great risk)
- Brain cancer (1.31 times greater risk)
- Colon cancer (1.21 times great risk)
- Leukemia (1.14 times greater risk)

The facts also state that firefighters are being diagnosed with cancer in their 30's and 40's that, according to the American Cancer Society, should not be diagnosed until their 60's-70's.

(<http://www.cancer.org/acs/groups/content/@editorial/documents/document/acspc-044552.pdf>)

The working group that was convened in 2016-2017 drafted legislation to provide wage replacement for firefighters diagnosed with cancer. This was a good first step, but it failed to address the long term affects of cancer. Retirement provisions, the continuation of healthcare benefits prior to reaching eligibility, or in the event of their death, protections and continuation of benefits for the deceased family members. By placing firefighter cancer in workers' compensation, Connecticut's firefighters will have the necessary protections in place to bring some solace in a very trying time.

Please pass SB 141 for your firefighters.

Respectfully,

Richard Hart

Director of Legislative and Political Affairs

Uniformed Professional Firefighters Association of Connecticut

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. 5871 (Proposed).

Richard Hart

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