



# PENNSYLVANIA FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES INSTITUTE

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Chairman Barrar and Sainato thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify.

I am Donald Konkle Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fire and Emergency Service Institute. I also serve as the co chair of the Fireman's Association of State of Pennsylvania Law and Legislative Committee. Additionally I spent 37 years with the Harrisburg Bureau of Fire the last 27 as Chief and Emergency Management Coordinator.

I would like to address three issues the

1. Risk to firefighter of death and injury as well as occupational disease; like cancer
2. The value provided to the Commonwealth and it municipalities by the fire service.
3. Fairness

For decades, firefighting has been listed by U.S. Bureau of Labor Statics as one of the most hazardous occupations in the United States. Therefore, it is not surprising the cost of worker's compensation insurance is expensive.

The risk of firefighting continues to increase. The amount of plastic and other hydrocarbons used for interior finishes and furniture has increased dramatically of the last 20 years and continues to increase to this day. This causes fires burn faster and hotter than ever before. These fires also produce more smoke containing deadly cancer causing byproducts and other hazardous materials. Not only are structure fires more dangerous but firefighters encounter hazardous materials at transportation accidents and other events; increasing their risk of cancer.

Also the effort to find lighter and cheaper building materials leads to early structural collapse and an increase in firefighter deaths and injuries.

When examining the cost of providing fire protection we must also examine the value provided by fire departments. The Pennsylvania fire service provides an estimated 6 billion dollars in avoided cost to our local governments. Additionally, the cost of homeowners insurance is reduced because of the quality of our fire departments.

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Eliminating or reducing the benefits provided to firefighters will have a detrimental effect on the recruitment and retention of firefighters. This will result a dramatic rise in the cost of fire protection; as volunteers are replace with paid staff.

Providing adequate insurance protection to firefighters is a matter of fairness. It is unreasonable to ask a firefighter who works in a high-risk profession to bankrupt his family contracted because of their work.

The Harrisburg Bureau of Fire is a large combination department. The volunteer members and the career members we both exposed to the same risk. It is necessary to continue protect both with the same level of benefits.

In closing the current law was developed over a multiple year period involving all the stakeholders and using the best science possible to determine the types of cancer directly related to firefighting. PFESI strongly support keeping the law as it was passed.

Thank you I would bc happy to take questions.