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To PA House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee on Security and  
Emergency Response Readiness,

My name is Donna Thompson, and I am a two-time lung cancer survivor. I was first diagnosed in October 2015 with stage 2a non-small cell adenocarcinoma. At that time I had the upper right lobe of my lung removed followed by just two cycles of chemotherapy since my body was having troubling tolerating it. In 2016 I received the news that there was no evidence of disease. During the next 6 years I had a dozen or more CT scans in hopes of catching a recurrence early. During that time, I joined several organizations, raised funds, participated in lung cancer walks, helped launch a cancer survivors support group where I received care during that time, and was a frequent speaker at various wellness events where I would tell my story of a surprising cancer diagnosis proving that anyone with lungs is susceptible to lung cancer.

It is important to note that at the time of my first diagnosis, I was a 45 years-old woman who had never smoked. My only self-explanation is that environmental exposures play a significant role in my propensity to develop lung cancer. In 2015 I learned that my particular tumor spreads through "air spaces" (respiratory tract). It was thought to be rare and one and done back then.

In the summer of 2021 is when I met Dr. John Whetstine when I attended a community event at his home. This event brought together doctors, firefighters, researchers, scientists, lung cancer survivors, families and supporters all with a focus on spreading awareness and love within the lung cancer community. It was truly a remarkable event. I was not a patient at Fox Chase at the time but decided I wanted to help Dr. Whetstine and also visit his lab. But, a few months later I was surprised with a 2<sup>nd</sup> lung cancer discovery and diagnosis. This time it was in my lower right lobe, stage 2b. I would then have a second portion of my left lung removed followed by four rounds of chemotherapy and an attempt at a long-term targeted therapy drug since the bio-marker testing showed the tumor to be positive for EGFR exon 19 mutation. Unfortunately, my body rejected both attempts at me taking this drug that has proven successful at reducing risks for recurrence. This time I would receive all of my care and treatment at Fox Chase and stayed in contact with Dr. Whetstine. In fall of 2022, I attended another lung cancer community event at Dr. Whetstine's home and shared my some of my story and experience with the guests. I also decided I wanted to be a part of a community council that Dr. Whetstine discussed.

Hearing the stories of the firefighters moved me. I don't think the community really recognizes the risks and exposures that firefighters endure. I don't know that I really understood before hearing Frank Baxter sharing. We need to develop screenings for those most at risk. Screenings lead to early detection and more favorable outcomes. I am living proof that early detection saves lives. Discovered by happenstance in 2015 helped me but it also it took me going to the ER for a visit for something else. Had I not done that, it is quite possible that I would not be here now. My commitment to never missing a follow-up scan or appointment over seven years led to a second early-stage diagnosis. Discovering one has lung or any type of cancer shouldn't be left up to happenstance. But far too often, that is the case and rarely is it diagnosed before spreading. Currently, high costs and lack of opportunity prevent many firefighters from getting screenings and there is a lack of research in risk prevention for firefighters.

We must do better. The people who put their lives on the line for us by running into burning buildings are also exposing themselves to harmful toxins and they deserve to have someone looking out for them. The project I am working on at Fox Chase is so important, and I am proud to be a part of it. I fully support our ongoing efforts at Fox Chase Cancer Center working with Drs. Whetstone and Whitaker, and hope the PA House will stand behind such efforts to impact more lives through investment and partnership, including supporting House Bill 2842 P.N. 3510.

Sincerely,  
Donna Thompson, SHRM-CP