

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

Frank Baxter, M.S., CSP
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Dear PA House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee on Security and Emergency Response Readiness,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed legislation (House Bill 2842 P.N. 3510) toward helping reduce out of pocket expenses for prostate cancer screening. As a longtime resident North Wales, PA, I received my B.A. from Temple in Environmental Engineering Technology/Environmental Technology and my master's degree from St. Joseph's University in Environmental Protection and Safety Management. Currently, I am President/Safety Officer of the North Penn Volunteer Fire Company, Director of Loss Prevention at Construction Risk Partners, and Adjunct Professor at Temple University College of Engineering. Combined, I have accrued 45 years of experience in emergency services, not only with North Penn but also as a State Instructor and as a member of the county Instruction Support Team (IST).

I am currently working with Drs. Whetstine and Whitaker at Fox Chase Cancer Center to develop a survey for assessing occupational exposure risks of our firefighters. We have also discussed plans and obtained pilot funds to develop educational programming as well as urine/blood collection for identifying molecular markers for and exposure so that we can encourage coverage for screening. Currently, high costs and lack of opportunity prevent many firefighters from getting screenings and there is a lack of research in this area. We hope to work together to establish best practices for avoiding exposures and ultimately to impact policy decision making, including decisions around insurance benefits and protections for firefighters at the state level.

I first met Dr. Whetstine at a chili cookoff we were both attending. At that event, we realized we had a shared interest in advocating for cancer patients, survivors, and those at higher risk for developing cancer. He, as a cancer researcher and Director of the Cancer Epigenetics Institute and co-leader of the Nuclear Dynamics and Cancer Program at Fox Chase, and me as a volunteer firefighter and director of Environmental Health Safety started our collaboration. Following this event, John invited me to a lung cancer advocacy event at his house, called the White Ribbon Project. Here, we further discussed the increased cancer risk associated with firefighter occupational exposures, including bladder and prostate cancers in addition to lung. It was also at the White Ribbon Project that I met Dr. Amy Whitaker and other researchers from Fox Chase Cancer Center that I am now working closely with toward improving the risks and screening opportunities for those, such as firefighters, who take on increased occupational risk to protect and serve our community. Therefore, I am very excited and encouraged to firefighter screening and health making it to legislative consideration.

In conclusion, I am enthusiastic about our ongoing efforts at Fox Chase Cancer Center and hope the PA House will stand behind such efforts to impact more lives through such investment and partnership, including supporting House Bill 2842 P.N. 3510.

Sincerely,

Frank Baxter, M.S., CSP