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Harold P. Wimmer

October 23, 2023

The Honorable Jared G. Solomon, Chair

The Honorable Mark M. Gillen, Republican Chair

Veterans and Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee on Security & Emergency Response

Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Harrisburg, PA

Re: Informational meeting on Battling Cancer and Other Occupational Diseases

Dear Representatives Solomon and Gillen,

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the state's endeavor to establish an optimal screening and educational program aimed at safeguarding firefighters from the occupational hazards associated with cancer. I am cognizant of similar initiatives in other states and wholeheartedly commend this action, as it stands to be a lifesaver. Those who risk their lives for the safety of others deserve no less. I am genuinely excited about the forthcoming discussions and wholeheartedly endorse the research and educational endeavors undertaken by Fox Chase.

I am personally acquainted with their work, having witnessed Dr. Johnathan Whetstine receive esteemed accolades from the American Lung Association for his groundbreaking discoveries. Dr. Whetstine consistently apprises me of opportunities to further the mission of alleviating the burden of lung cancer. Moreover, the Nuclear Dynamics and Cancer program at Fox Chase has forged invaluable partnerships with community advocates such as Frank Baxter, Tiffany Fagnani, and Donna Thompson. This collaborative effort also involves the Community Outreach and Engagement Office, led by Dr. Chanita Zeigler-Johnson and Evelyn Gonzalez, MA. Together, their outreach and advocacy initiatives span diverse backgrounds and experiences. Their financial and intellectual investment has empowered the team at Fox Chase Cancer Center to devise an innovative questionnaire geared towards education and promotion of screening. This, in conjunction with the scientific prowess of this program at FCCC, has led to the development of assays for assessing exposure markers. The ultimate objective is to educate and promote screening, and to advocate for legislative changes that will ensure firefighters receive adequate and affordable screening, given the occupational hazards they face, thereby safeguarding the community. These endeavors have also garnered support from leaders of the Pennsylvania Cancer Coalition, contributing to the shaping of policies and safeguards for firefighters.

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The impact of these efforts is both timely and profound. The dedication of this team is truly commendable and aligns seamlessly with Pennsylvania's consideration of enhanced coverage and screening for all firefighters in the state. In fact, I have discussed with Dr. Whetstine the potential of disseminating the questionnaire beyond Pennsylvania, extending its impact nationwide. It is my hope that you can discern my unwavering enthusiasm for this initiative. I implore the PA House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee on Security and Emergency Response Readiness to acknowledge and support the ongoing efforts. It is paramount that we collaborate with Fox Chase and other stakeholders to further educate, screen, and safeguard firefighters, as well as any other individuals at occupational risk. While lung cancer is a prevailing concern for firefighters, they are also susceptible to other forms, including bladder and prostate cancer. Thus, comprehensive screening measures are bound to save lives and alleviate the burden on families who have committed to safeguarding their communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harold Wimmer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'H' and 'W'.

Harold Wimmer, President & CEO
American Lung Association
312-919-7811