



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

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February 24, 2016

The Honorable Richard Hanna
U.S. House of Representatives
319 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Hanna:

On behalf of the 11,000 members of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), I would like to thank you for introducing legislation to create a voluntary national cancer registry. This legislation will create an important resource for researchers looking to understand and prevent the growing occurrence of cancer among our nation's firefighters. The IAFC endorses this legislation and urges Congress to pass it.

While there is still a need to do more comprehensive research on cancer and the national fire and emergency service, there is an overall higher risk for cancer among firefighters. Research has shown that there are significant increases in the risks of cancers in the colon, prostate, intestine, lung, bladder, kidney and other organs in firefighters. For some types of cancer, the risk relative to the general population can be 229% higher. However, more research needs to be done to identify what causes these increased risk of cancers and how to prevent them.

Your bill would create an excellent opportunity for cancer researchers and the fire service community by creating a voluntary national registry for firefighters with cancer. The data in the registry would be anonymous, but include important information about the firefighter's medical history; demographic information; number of incident responses and years in service; whether the firefighter was career or volunteer; what other jobs the firefighter might have had; and other risk factors. In addition, the registry is directed to include under-represented types of firefighters such as women, minorities and volunteers. Most importantly, researchers that use the data from this registry would have to make their research and results available to the fire and emergency service, so that their findings can be tied into updated firefighting procedures, tactics, and personal protective equipment. It is our hope that future researchers will be able to reduce the occurrence of cancer in our nation's fire and emergency service.

The IAFC thanks you for your leadership on this important issue. Cancer is a daily concern for many of the nation's retired firefighters, and it must be addressed. We think that your bill will help researchers to identify the causes of cancers for firefighters and help us take steps to prevent it. We look forward to working with you to pass this legislation this year.

Sincerely,

Fire Chief Rhoda Mae Kerr, EFO, CFO, MPA
President and Chair of the Board

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