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**Subject:** RE: Testimony on SF609/HF419  
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Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony regarding SF609/HF419.

I am speaking on behalf of numerous fire chiefs and firefighters in St. Louis County and greater Minnesota whose communities will benefit from this timely and targeted legislation to increase funding for the departments who desperately need it. To be clear, the Virginia Fire Department does not benefit from this bill as we do not receive supplemental state aid, being a career department with no paid-on-call or volunteer firefighters.

The inequities between the metro and greater Minnesota are extremely stark when it comes to the disbursement of firefighter funding. Under the current formula the disbursement is based on property values and populations. This puts most of rural Minnesota at a strategic disadvantage right away, as those who can least afford it, still require a sufficient level of fire protection for their community. This legislation is an important step in the right direction, as it bases the funding formula on the number of active firefighters in each department affiliated with a relief association or the PERA Statewide Plan. For the average fire department in St. Louis County, this bill would increase their supplemental aid by three to four thousand dollars. These dollars are desperately needed for training, supplies, as well as compliant firefighting gear and equipment.

Thank you for the opportunity to advocate for the needs of greater Minnesota's fire service.



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