

Madam Chair and Members,

Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Joe Carpentier, Assistant Fire Chief of the Oakdale Fire Department. We are a small yet busy department that relies heavily on volunteers to serve our community and surrounding areas.

On behalf of our Department, I would like to voice concern for Senate File 609/House File 419. While reading through the proposed bill, it appears funding will be reduced for many departments that desperately need it. Minnesota departments already face volunteer recruitment and retention issues. The demands of a volunteer firefighter are higher than ever and reducing their funding seems to contradict what should be occurring. Training and certification requirements along with overall call volume continues to rise which add to the difficulty of recruitment and retention. Reducing volunteer funding could make it nearly impossible to hire firefighters thus increasing safety concerns for both firefighters and the communities they serve.

We ask for you Madam Chair and Commission Members, to not pass Senate File 609/House File 419 and continue to work with fire service organizations to identify more effective ways to support many departments around the state and their needs to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters to protect the communities they serve.

Thank you for your time and I appreciate your support in this matter.