



New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association, Inc.

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40 Collins Place
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December 12, 2022

Elizabeth Fine
Counsel
Office of Counsel to the Governor
New York State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

LETTER IN SUPPORT

RE: *S.6093-A (Gounardes)/A.7004-A (Abbate) – AN ACT to amend the retirement and social security law, in relation to certain medical presumptions applicable to members of the New York state and local employees retirement system*

Dear Ms. Fine:

The New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association (NYSPFFA), I.A.F.F. AFL-CIO, a not-for-profit association representing approximately 18,000 fire fighters in 107 Locals in various cities, villages, and towns across New York State, strongly support the enactment of this legislation, which will clarify the intent of the legislature regarding the existing statutory “Heart Presumption” with regard to performance of duty and accidental disability benefits.

Since the Heart Presumption was enacted, it has been interpreted differently by several New York State courts. As such, this bill would address the unintended narrow interpretations the presumption has received, thus allowing the “Heart Presumption” to function as originally envisioned.

Based on the nature of the tasks that many of these members are expected to perform, more specifically firefighters, the need to properly address this limitation is necessary. The leading cause of death among firefighters is heart disease. The mere fact that they engage in a dangerous occupation which places their lives on the line, and the extreme conditions in which they must perform their jobs exposes them to a higher likelihood of stress and coronary heart disease.

Numerous studies have been conducted demonstrating the effects that stress of this type of work has in contributing to heart disease and the overall health of firefighters. One such study identified that cardiovascular events, mainly due to coronary heart disease, accounts for 45% of deaths among firefighters on duty.



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Moreover, according to the International Association of Fire Fighters (“IAFF”), fire fighters have an increased risk of sudden cardiac events after participating in fire suppression activities. One-fifth of fire fighters engaging in live-fire suppression activities experience cardiac arrhythmias, an irregular series of heartbeats. Electrocardiograms obtained up to 12 hours following active firefighting show ventricular arrhythmias and changes indicative of inadequate blood supply to the heart. Fire fighters’ risk of death from a heart attack is up to 100 times greater than those performing non-emergency work.

For the foregoing reasons, the New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association strongly supports this bill being signed into law.

Respectfully submitted,


Samuel A. Fresina, President
New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association