



New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association, Inc.

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REV. JOHN TALLMAN
40 Collins Place
Albany, NY 12208

February 10, 2023

RE: AN ACT to amend the volunteer firefighters' benefit law, the general municipal law, the labor law, and the civil service law, in relation to permitting the paying of a nominal fee to volunteer firefighters

S.4005 (Budget)/A.3005 (Budget)
PPGG (Part H)

MEMORANDUM IN OPPOSITION

The New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association (NYSPPFA), I.A.F.F. AFL-CIO, a not-for-profit association representing approximately 18,000 firefighters in 108 Locals in various cities, villages and towns across New York State, strongly opposes the enactment of this legislation, which would pay volunteer fire fighters in New York State.

While our organization supports the Governor's efforts to stabilize statewide fire service to improve emergency response, this provision only addresses one aspect of fire service (volunteers), is the wrong approach, and could lead to the reduction of paid, professional fire fighters across the state.

This bill would provide a "nominal fee" to volunteer fire fighters, which is undefined and does not outline which volunteer fire fighters would be eligible for payment. As a result, volunteer fire fighters that have not completed necessary training, such as interior firefighting, would still be able to access this benefit.

This anti-union, anti-labor proposal could have a devastating impact on our membership and could pave the way for municipalities to reduce or even eliminate their paid fire fighters in lieu of paid volunteers. Unfortunately, we have already witnessed this troubling and short-sighted movement in several villages and cities across New York State, where local governments have chosen poor public policy rather than prudent public safety.



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The most effective way to ensure that a community has adequate fire protection service is through a fully staffed, trained fire department that is available 24 hours a day and seven days a week to respond to fires and other emergency situations. NYSPFFA believes that the state should continue the transition toward “combination departments” staffed by both paid fire fighters and trained volunteers. The combination department model has already been a proven success in many suburban and rural areas in New York State, particularly in Monroe and Westchester counties.

NYSPFFA would like to collaborate with New York State, the Division of Homeland Security, and Emergency Services and the Office of Fire Prevention and Control in reimagining fire protection services. We should work together to address fire fighter safety, the recruitment and retention of paid and volunteer fire fighters, and how to address the escalating increases in mutual aid calls.

However, for the foregoing reasons, the New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association strongly opposes the enactment of this legislation and urges the Senate and Assembly to reject it from the Governor’s Budget.

Respectfully submitted,

Samuel A. Fresina, President

New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association