



January 28, 2025

Chairman Smith and members of the Committee:

My name is Council member Becky Tuttle, representing District 2 in the City of Wichita. I am writing to provide my support for House Bill 2024: The Fighting Chance for Firefighters Act.

Due to growing concerns of the effects of cancer in Wichita Firefighters, the Wichita Local IAFF #135 began discussing the need for cancer screening with Ascension Via Christi. Because of those discussions, the Protecting our Heroes Initiative was formed with the IAFF Local #135, Wichita Fire Department (WFD) and Ascension Via Christi with the mission to implement comprehensive cancer screening, education and support services for WFD firefighters and their families, fostering a culture of awareness, prevention, and resilience. As a City of Wichita Council Member, I have the privilege of helping to be on the ground floor in launching this initiative. Through this, I have learned a lot about cancer issues facing not only our Wichita firefighters but also the fire service throughout the state of Kansas and our entire nation.

Firefighters face unique hazards when protecting the citizens and property of our communities. The toxic gases in burning structures and even the chemicals used make protective firefighting gear exposes firefighters to many carcinogens. The International Association of Firefighters reports cancer is now the leading cause of line-of-duty deaths among our United States Firefighters, accounting for 66% of those deaths. Studies from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) found firefighters have a 9% higher risk of being diagnosed with cancer and a 14% higher risk of dying from cancer compared to the general population. These studies have found higher risks for firefighters than the public in many specific cancers. These cancers and associated risks are highlighted below:

- Testicular cancer – 2.02 times greater
- Mesothelioma – 2.0 times greater
- Multiple myeloma -1.53 times greater
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma – 1.51 times greater
- Skin cancer – 1.39 times greater
- Malignant melanoma – 1.31 times greater
- Brain cancer -1.31 times greater
- Prostate cancer – 1.28 times greater
- Colon cancer -1.21 times great risk
- Leukemia – 1.14 times greater risk

Our fire fighters protect us every day, and I believe it is our duty to also protect them. By allocating dedicated funding for firefighter cancer screenings, we can ensure that these brave individuals have access to the lifesaving tools they need to detect cancer at its earliest, most treatable stages. Yearly firefighter cancer screening provides early diagnosis in the non-symptomatic firefighter allowing for the best chance for successful treatment. When cancer

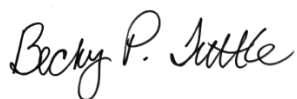
care is delayed, there is a lower chance of survival, greater problems associated with treatment, and higher costs of care. Screenings and early diagnosis improve cancer outcomes by providing care at the earliest possible stage and is therefore an important public health strategy in all settings. Moreover, providing screenings demonstrates a commitment to supporting our firefighters and mitigating the long-term consequences of their service.

As we have been speaking with various fire service groups throughout the State, the following groups have voiced support of this bill:

International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)  
IAFF 2<sup>nd</sup> District  
IAFF Wichita Local 135  
IAFF Topeka Firefighters Local 83  
IAFF Hutchinson Firefighters Local 179  
IAFF Lawrence Firefighters Local 1596  
IAFF Olathe Firefighters Local 2542  
IAFF Emporia Firefighters Local 818  
IAFF Manhattan Firefighters Local 2275  
IAFF Hays Firefighters Local 2119  
IAFF Johnson County Fire District One Local 3559  
Wichita Fire Department  
Kansas Fire Chiefs Association  
Office of Fire Marshal  
Kansas State Fire Marshals Association  
Kansas Wildland Association  
Kansas Board of EMS  
Kansas State Relief Association  
Kansas State Council for Fire Fighters  
Wichita Firefighters Relief Association  
Kansas Chapter of International Association of Arson Investigators  
Olathe Fire Department  
Kingman Fire Department

I fully support House Bill 2024. I believe that in Kansas, we owe it to our heroes to support them in any way we can. Thank you for your time and attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Becky P. Tuttle. MA  
Wichita City Council Member, District II

