

May 1, 2020

The Honorable Jerry Little, Chair
Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery Legislative Advisory Board
107 North Main St.
Concord, NH 03301

William J. McQuillen of Portsmouth - Written Testimony

Chairman Little and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to speak today on the behalf of the Professional Fire Fighters of New Hampshire (PFFNH). The Professional Fire Fighters of New Hampshire represent approximately two thousand active and retired firefighters, paramedics, EMTs and dispatchers across the state of New Hampshire, serving over sixty-five percent of our state's population. Our members have been on the frontlines of this pandemic consistently responding to calls and coming in close contact with those infected with COVID-19.

We appreciate all the legislative and state leaders who have spoken on our behalf for more funding on protective equipment, and other funds. We agree that more needs to be done to protect our members who are serving our communities and are taking greater risk. Over a hundred of our members had to self-quarantine from coming in contact with individuals possibly infected with COVID-19 and many of them had to go to state facilities or hotels out of fear that they may infect their families. We believe there should be some funding used to assist our members with mental health during this pandemic. Our members have responded to calls outside their normal duties which has added additional stress and anxiety. A mental health component could help alleviate such problems.

We also request that some funding be considered for Local Municipal relief. As the Nation and State begin to recover economically, we fear that the municipal budgets will be effected by declining revenues, and budget reductions which lead to service cuts, eliminating boots on the ground on the front lines. I would respectfully ask that the State do all it can to eliminate this possibility of making the citizens less safe by making these resources available to offset the costs, and provide direct aid for public safety departments. The state has given additional pay to long term care workers and liquor store employees but not EMTs & firefighters. Since fire fighters and EMTs are on the frontline they for being exposed to COVID-19 they should also be considered for these types of programs should they be expanded.

This pandemic has changed fire fighters' normal protocol when responding to calls in their community. We need more remote learning opportunities to assure best practices for the safety of our members and the public are communicated and up to date. The State could develop a new grant program to help municipal public safety agencies receive funding similar to the grant processes that the State already manages, which is administered through HSEM to allow for training, equipment and apparatus.

The firefighters and EMT's are always ready to respond to the needs of our community even in times of crisis. We ask that you please consider our requests and thank you for your time this afternoon.

Respectfully Submitted,

William J. McQuillen
President