



1225 International Airport Road, Suite 220
Anchorage, Alaska 99518
www.akaction.org

March 21, 2016

Dear Representative Josephson:

Thank you for your leadership in introducing and serving as prime sponsor for HB No. 84, "An Act relating to the presumption of compensability for a disability resulting from certain diseases for firefighters, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and police officers. We also thank Representatives Tuck and Hopkins for co-sponsoring this bill.

We strongly support HB No. 84 because it is inclusive of emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and peace officers in addition to firefighters who are employed by a state or municipal fire department and volunteer firefighters who are registered with the state fire marshall. It is critical to include all first responders under the provisions of this bill so that they and their families are eligible for compensation in the tragic event of disability resulting from the performance of their duties.

First responders risk their lives every day to protect the communities they live in. However, the risk of injury responding to fires is not the only aspect that makes their service a dangerous occupation. First responders face significant chemical exposures on the job due to the vast quantity of chemicals added to building materials, consumer products and the equipment they use every day. Many of these chemicals have been linked to cancer and other negative health concerns. Firefighters dying from occupational-related cancers now account for 65 percent of the line-of-duty deaths each year as reported to the International Association of Firefighters. This is the largest health-related issue facing the profession. Other first responders are similarly at risk.

In 2010, a NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health) study examined cancer incidence and cancer deaths in approximately 30,000 firefighters from San Francisco, Chicago, and Philadelphia fire departments between 1950 and 2009. The results showed that firefighters have higher rates of the digestive, oral, respiratory, and urinary systems cancers than the general U.S. population. A meta-analysis of 32 studies found an association between firefighting and increased incidence of cancers such as

multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, prostate cancer, and testicular cancer, compared to the general population.

We support the inclusion of breast cancer among the diseases for presumptive compensability because of increasing evidence of the association with higher rates among women firefighters. A study conducted in the San Francisco Fire Department found the rate of breast cancer among female firefighters aged 40-50 is six times the national average. Studies also show that firefighters are at greater risk of contracting the following cancers: testicular cancer (102% greater risk); multiple myeloma (53% greater risk); non-Hodgkin lymphoma (51% greater risk); skin cancer (39% greater risk); prostate cancer (28% greater risk); malignant melanoma (32% greater risk); brain cancer (32% greater risk); rectum (29% greater risk; stomach (22% greater risk); colon cancer (21% greater risk). Testicular cancer should be included in the provisions of this bill for presumptive compensability because of the high occupational risk and the fact that PFAS exposure (used in industrial firefighting foams), for example, is closely associated with testicular cancer.

We urge support and passage of HB 84 and additional measures to protect the health and safety of our first responders.

Sincerely,



Pamela Miller

Executive Director, Alaska Community on Toxics