



ALASKA PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

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North Pole – Fairbanks – Shemya – Anchorage – Juneau – Ketchikan – Sitka

alaskapffa.org



May 5, 2021

The Honorable Senator Roger Holland

Alaska State Capital Room 115

Juneau, AK 99801

Senator Holland,

The Alaska Professional Firefighters Association represents over 500 professional fire fighters and emergency medical personnel across the State of Alaska. On behalf of our membership, I am writing to express our strong support for SB 131.

It is no secret that cancer is an enormous concern for fire fighters. Fire fighter occupational cancer is the leading cause of line-of-duty deaths in the fire service. In 2019, more than 75% of the names of fire fighters added to the IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial in Colorado Springs, Colorado, were names of members who died from occupational cancer.

In 2010, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) published a multi-year study evaluating cancer in fire fighters. The results concluded that firefighters experience a much greater risk of developing cancers than the general public due to the exposures that we face through the course of our work.

In Alaska and in the fire service in general, more and more women are entering this profession that was once a predominantly male field. Studies have shown that female fire fighters are developing occupational breast cancer at much higher rates than other cancers. This is also not just an issue that is important to our female members. Although breast cancer is much rarer in men, one of our former male members in Fairbanks experienced a long battle with breast cancer that was determined to be directly related to his job as a 42 year fire fighter. In 2017, Fairbanks Fire Chief Warren Cummings passed away after battling breast cancer that had metastasized into other areas of his body.

The AKPFFA strongly supports SB 131 and we thank you for bringing this important issue forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Miranda". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Paul Miranda

President

Alaska Professional Firefighters Association

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