

Alaska State Legislature

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REPRESENTATIVE JAMES KAUFMAN

House Bill 204 ***Workers' Compensation Disability for Firefighters***

Sponsor Statement

Firefighting is an inherently dangerous job. It is important that workers' compensation insurance provides coverage for the inherent risks in that job, but right now there is a hole in that coverage - breast cancer.

This bill would add breast cancer to the list of presumed disability coverages for firefighters, so long as the firefighter could establish medically that the breast cancer was caused by work as a firefighter.

Instances of cancer in firefighters are shown to be higher than the general population, and this risk should be covered under presumed disability coverage. Studies that have evaluated cancer risk among women firefighters suggest they, like their male coworkers, may be at an elevated risk for overall cancer incidence (Daniels et al., 2014).

Cancer risk in the firefighter profession includes breast cancer specifically. Male firefighters are 7.5 times more likely to die from breast cancer than their non-fire service counterparts (Ma et al, 2005). These studies also suggest women firefighters may be at an elevated incidence risk for breast cancer (Daniels et al., 2014).

Several standard limitations apply to the list of presumptive diseases that breast cancer is going to be added to and there are stipulations upon which coverage may be denied. The presumption of compensability not only applies during periods of service but may also extend past this service period depending on tenure as a firefighter.

Thank you for your consideration of the addition of breast cancer to the list of presumed disability coverages for firefighters.

5/12/2021