

Chairman Fitzgerald, and members of the committee, please let me start off by thanking you for your time and to thank Representative Brabec, for introducing house bill 4360.

In 2021 I was invited to the 9-11 ceremony on the capitol steps by then house minority leader Donna Lasinski. I spent the day talking to her about the fire service as she gave me a tour of the capital.

During our conversation, one of the questions was asked on what the state could do better to help out the fire service. My answer was that we needed funding, and we had talked about ways to achieve that.

My department has an interlocal agreement, however by law we can't go for our own millage and don't qualify for most grants. We then talked about fire authorities and all the benefits that come from a more regionalized department than each rural township having their own department. It was then, that I explained to representative Lasinsky that, unfortunately, the law doesn't allow our department to become an authority. After our discussion she advised me that this needed to be fixed and she would introduce the legislative change for me.

She introduced House Bill 6569 but unfortunately because of term limits, and the amount of time it took to finalize the draft we ran out of time to get the bill in front of this committee.

The Saline Area Fire Department covers the city of Saline, Saline Township, Lodi Township, and a portion of York township.

Now to some 2 words don't mean much. But to the residents we serve they have a huge impact. The first word is what I just said. "Portion" Portion means that we cover the portion closest to our station. 2 Local Area Fire Departments cover a portion of York township, to provide the best service to those citizens. We can get rid of the word portion and choose to not cover York township at all, however that is not what is

best for the community. But because we cover a “portion” of the township we can’t become an Authority.

The second word is “total”. Because we only serve a “Portion” of York we are not able to form an authority because the law states that the jurisdiction must be comprised of the “total” territory within the jurisdiction. The word “total” limits opportunities for the 2 departments that provide the best coverage for York township.

I am here today asking you to approve this bill so that we can be like many other departments in the state that can form our own authority without having to reduce coverage to those we serve.

Now why is this so important?

Currently because of 1 word we can’t become an authority which means we can’t levy taxes, or have voters decide and vote on a millage, or special assessments. Our citizens don’t get the same opportunities provided to them because we did the right thing by combining services for a region of 85 square miles.

In Michigan you have categories. If you look up the Saline Area Fire Department, specifically in the treasury department you will see us listed as an authority even though we are not. These categories are typically: County, City, Township, or Authority. There is no “Other” category listed. -Although we are an “Other”. Others don’t get to apply for millages, others struggle for grant funding, others get left off of most things because others are assumed to fall under the authority category. So, for all intents and purposes, we classify as an authority, until it comes time to receive the benefits of being an authority.

This one word....Total.. is holding us back. Please support adopting this bill so that Area Fire Departments like ourselves, can get the proper funding and support they need. Thank you for your time.