



House Insurance Committee

Testimony Re: HB 4172

Good Morning Madame Chair and members of the committee. My name is Mark Docherty, I am the President of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union. We represent more than 5,000 full time fire fighters in the state of Michigan. HB 4172 is the culmination of many years of work to ensure that all fire fighters have the protection of the First Responders Presumed Coverage Fund. We have worked for several years to ensure adequate funding in the fund. Our funding comes from the recently passed legislation on online sports betting which will provide \$4M annually to pay for claims made against the fund. This is important information to understand because it means that there will be enough resources to cover the cost of the expansion and also, that general fund dollars are NOT required for the expansion.

This legislation expands the coverage to all fire fighters whether they are part paid or volunteer. Fire fighters typically retire by age 55 due to the challenges of the job on their bodies. This creates a significant gap in coverage for the retirees until Medicare age at 65. HB 4172 would expand coverage to retirees until they reach Medicare age protecting them in the event of a cancer diagnosis. In addition, as we have more women who are entering the fire services, we are seeing a direct linkage to increased breast, ovarian and cervical cancer diagnosis. This legislation would ensure that breast and ovarian cancers are a covered type of cancer.

It may seem like a simple change to many of you but the naming of this legislation after Christopher Slezak is extremely personal and important to me. Chris was a fire fighter with the Sterling Heights fire department. In 2009, he was diagnosed with leukemia and battled with the disease until his death a few months ago in November. Chris was very instrumental in the passage of the legislation in 2015. He was always present during the legislative hearings even while facing chemotherapy treatments to provide testimony about the importance of passing the legislation despite the fact he would have never benefitted from its passage. He knew how important this fund would be for his future brothers and sisters in the fire services who developed cancer.

I ask for your support of HB 4172 to help protect our fire fighters during their most difficult time.