



OREGON STATE FIRE FIGHTERS COUNCIL

International Association of Fire Fighters
AFL-CIO CLC

February 1, 2022

House Committee on Business and Labor
Chair Paul Holvey
Co-Chair Bonham
Co-Chair Grayber

Business and Labor Committee,

For the record my name is Karl Koenig, President of the Oregon State Fire Fighters Council. We represent 3700 career fire fighters and paramedics throughout Oregon.

We are here to testify in favor of HB 4113 the Presumptive Cancer Bill for career women fire fighters and bladder cancer for both female and male fire fighters.

This discussion is about people. HB 4113 determines on whether or not to include female reproductive system cancers and bladder cancers as part of the cancers listed in ORS 656.802 or the fire fighters "presumption". In 2009 the initial cancers listed included prostate and testicular cancers but did not include the equivalent cancers of the female reproductive system. This bill is a vital issue of equality and health for all 276 career female fire fighters. As a percentage that equals 7.5% of our total members. Cancer is the leading cause of fire fighter death in America. The addition of these cancers is a commonsense measure with miniscule impact on the Workers Compensation system as a claim number or cost. We urge you to join us in supporting this bill.

Management Labor Advisory Committee evaluation of the bill proposal is for some a litmus test of a Workers Compensation Carriers financial exposure balanced with a need to cover the worker, in this case a fire fighter, in the event of cancers contracted while at work. No one denies the entry into a burning building is dangerous, but do we really know all the effects of interior structural firefighting? The discussion of the data by MLAC and both sides of the issue is contradictory at best, some Worker Compensation Carriers and the OSFFC are using the same data finding different conclusions. How do we resolve this data stalemate? We add female reproductive system and bladder cancer as a presumptive occupational illness to Oregon's rebuttable presumption.

HB 4113 passes all the remaining charges of MLAC, it provides balance in the contraction of specific occupational cancers to both genders, adequacy of benefits, remember, you must have a listed cancer to be eligible for the presumption. A portion of the solution or concern is affordability, treatments are not inexpensive, the Oregon Fire Service continues to improve through prevention, education, protective gear improvements, participation in the National Fire Fighter Cancer registry and annual NFPA 1582 medical exams to reduce the occurrence of occupational health risks to fire fighters.



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We hear time and time again the relative inability to overturn the presumption once made, but I would ask you to reach out to the four active appeal cases over the current presumption and the toll it has or will take on the fire fighter and their family's while those appeals linger on.

While the passage of HB 4113 will not prevent appeals on either side, occupationally it will allow fire fighters the protection of a system that is supposed to protect them in the event of a specific cancer diagnosis while employed as a fire fighter.

Receiving an occupational cancer diagnosis cannot be defined as a winner or loser event. These diagnoses are a life changing event of which some do not recover. The inclusion of these cancers is part of the ongoing challenge of being a fire fighter in Oregon. This Bill is about equity, and people.

Your fire fighters urge a Yes vote in Committee on HB 4113.

Respectfully,

Karl Koenig s/s

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