



International Association of Fire Chiefs

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June 14, 2023

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Chairman
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Ranking Member
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Lofgren:

On behalf of the more than 11,000 members of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), I thank you for the opportunity to testify at the May 11 hearing entitled *Reauthorizing the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) and the Fire Grant Programs: Evaluating Effectiveness and Preparedness for Modern Challenges*. I greatly appreciated the opportunity to testify before the committee and explain the importance of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program, the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) program, and the USFA. I appreciate your dedication to reauthorizing these important programs.

Representative Tom Kean, Jr. introduced H.R. 4090 – with bipartisan support – to reauthorize funding for these programs. America's fire chiefs ask that the committee mark up this legislation soon.

As the nation responds to major summer wildland fires and prepares for the hurricane season, it is important to recognize that local fire departments are the first line of response to these disasters, along with hazmat incidents, structural fires, and other daily incidents. In the aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic, fire and EMS departments are facing challenges in recruiting and retaining career and volunteer firefighters. They also are facing challenges from the supply chain crisis as the costs of fire apparatus and equipment escalate and delivery times are postponed by years.

The AFG and SAFER programs help to address these problems. They are peer-reviewed matching grants to local fire departments. The SAFER grant program helps fund the hiring of career firefighters and the recruitment and retention of volunteer fire and EMS personnel. The AFG program helps fire departments afford equipment and training to meet perform their daily mission and respond to major incidents. In addition, the USFA hosts the National Fire Academy, which is the nation's premier fire educational facility and educates the future leadership of America's fire and emergency service. Also, USFA is in the process of updating its national fire and emergency incident reporting system to allow fire departments to better manage their operations based on data. It is important that these programs remain authorized and funded.

The leadership of America's fire and emergency service thanks you for your dedication to reauthorizing the AFG and SAFER grant programs and the USFA. The IAFC asks that the committee move expeditiously to consider H.R. 4090 and we look forward to working with you to pass legislation that will become law this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna M. Black".

Fire Chief Donna M. Black, EFO, CFO
President and Board Chair

: kpl