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South Fire District
Middletown, Connecticut

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Good afternoon Senator Harp and Representative Geragosian. My name is Michael Osiecki and I am a fire fighter in the South Fire District of Middletown.

On November 24th, Governor M. Jodi Rell announced a comprehensive deficit mitigation plan intended to erase a shortfall of nearly \$470 million in the state budget that took effect in September. The plan includes cuts in at least two vital areas affecting fire fighters and the training they receive as newly hired members of a municipal or state fire department and ongoing training throughout their career. I don't need to tell you how critically important it is that fire fighters be trained to high standards. This is necessary to protect the lives and health of these men and women, but also to protect the members of the general public who fire fighters are sworn to protect throughout their careers.

The current training budgets of fire departments around the state will be adversely affected by these cutbacks as incoming 'rookies' are either in training or will be during this budget year. Shortfalls created by these reductions will strain already meager training budgets and delay much needed training programs.

The second area adversely affected by these cutbacks are at the Fire Training School Program level. Reductions of nearly 50% in some cases are possible at these training facilities. It is here that ongoing training of fire fighters is provided. New skills and refresher training is critical to a fire fighter's ability to remain prepared for the rigors of our profession. Fire Training Schools are an integral part of the fire services' ability to put capable men and women on the scene of an emergency and perform in a safe and effective manner.

The following is a list of the budget items affected. Please restore these appropriations.

Firefighter Training I -126,313
Payments to Volunteer Fire -48,750
Fire Training Schools - Willimantic -40,450 Torrington -20,342 New Haven -12,091
Derby -9,285 Wolcott -25,041 Fairfield -17,599 Hartford -42,334
Middletown -14,763 Stamford -13,858

TOTAL -370,826

Thank You for your time.

Michael Osiecki
South Fire District, Middletown Connecticut