



## Northern Ohio Fire Fighters Association

P.O. Box 301053 Cleveland, Ohio 44130

[www.NOFF.org](http://www.NOFF.org)

June 2, 2020

Dear Chairman Brinkman, Vice Chairman Antani, Ranking Member Boggs and members of the Ohio House Insurance Committee:

**Thank you for the opportunity to submit written proponent testimony in support of HB 330 (Patton) Workers Compensation Experience in Firefighter Cancer Claims.**

The Northern Ohio Fire Fighters (NOFF) is made up of over 20 local fire departments representing active and retired firefighters in five different counties including (Cuyahoga, Lake, Summit, Wayne, and Portage Counties.)

Our organization has a history of service and knows the importance of working to move this State forward as members have served on the State Fire Commission, statewide task forces, and the Ohio Police and Fire Pension Board. We have been involved in regionalization projects, fire life safety programs with fire dampers, and pension reform. Giving and being active in the community is also very important to NOFF, the organization and its members have raised considerable funding for various charities over the years.

With the work to pass SB 27 Cancer Presumption, we have now seen the same situation that Rep. Patton mentioned in sponsor testimony that many cancer claims have been slowed down and delayed in drawn out appeals process. Municipalities have challenged many of these claims because of possible concerns about BWC premiums and group rating. NOFF feels HB 330 provides a pragmatic option for localities to fund the important coverage and concepts the General Assembly passed in SB 27.

Brian Dunlap who serves the Northern Ohio Fire Fighters as a benefits consultant and is a Broadview Heights Firefighter with over 28 years experiences agrees. Brian has worked to properly protect the BWC state fund and keep it strong while providing much needed proper benefits for those who suffer untimely injuries and illnesses including cancer. These situations could take years to manifest and raise their ugly heads, in the line of duty. However, many times it may be years after their service is terminated.

Here is Brian's perspective while working with families:

Families who encounter such a terrible illness as cancer have it extremely hard and it weighs on the core of even the strongest of families. Firefighters give unselfishly and in return these men and women ask very little.

I personally have looked into the eyes of many of these public servants, fire as well as police officers, whom on their death bed days if not hours from them taking their last breath and told them, while holding their hands, that we will take care of your loved ones because we have people in leadership that can make this possible.

NOFF was blessed to be able to help a firefighter the very day the cancer presumptive passed. It was my privilege to be given this responsibility to help this member and other members as well by our leadership at NOFF. I provide help with a system that at times can be difficult, but it is an honor.

I will never forget when a fire fighter with severe cancer, Seamus, was with his parents. His parents had come over from their native Ireland to see their sick son in America in his darkest hours. I happened to be with Seamus, his wife, and children. I will never forget the look in his mother's eyes of hopelessness for her son. I told her without hesitation, Mrs. Culligan its gonna be ok for two reasons. First, only the good Lord can take away hope, and I'm pretty sure that's not gonna happen so you don't give up hope. Second, was we have people in our State that when Seamus recovers he will be able to resume a fruitful life, and rest assured if God needs Seamus more protections at the State will take care of your boy's legacy.

I wish I could take credit for the first statement, but Dr. Timothy Mapstone Pediatric neurosurgeon at RB&C Rainbows and Babies Children's told me that when my own son Travis was diagnosed with a brain tumor at the age of 6. The second statement was mine because I knew Representative Tom Patton understood the need for this legislation (cancer presumptive) for individuals (first responders) that are a community's first line of defense and many times their last line of defense. At this time, there is a need to now enhance the system.

From NOFF and coordinator Dunlap's experiences, we support HB 330.

When we negotiate contracts with municipalities, many of the best solutions are when both sides find policies that move both the municipality and the fire service forward. We feel HB 330 provides that proper balance of care to those fire fighters that have served and been impacted by cancer and the ability for municipalities to have another tool to use in implementing SB 27.

Thank you for your review of this important bill and for the opportunity to provide written testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Gmetro', enclosed within a large, loopy oval scribble.

Samuel J. Gmetro

President, Northern Ohio Fire Fighters