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Chief John Chapin
Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association
House Bill 575, Proponent Testimony
House Ways and Means Committee
April 30, 2019

Chairman Schaffer, Vice-Chair Lipps, Ranking Member Rogers and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 143. My name is John Chapin and I serve as Chief of the New London Volunteer Fire Dept. in Huron County.

I am here today on behalf of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association in support of legislation that will help incentivize volunteer service within Ohio's first responder community.

House Bill 143 authorizes an income tax credit for volunteer firefighters and volunteer emergency medical technicians, in addition to volunteer peace officers. The income tax credit increases as the volunteer accrues more service years with \$2,000 after 11 or more service years set as the cap on the tax credit. The service years are calculated by one of two ways. First, a volunteer can accrue a service year by serving on 15% of the department's or organization's emergency runs during the year. The second way to accrue a service year is for a volunteer to serve 15% of the days in the year during which volunteer emergency responders performed tasks other than making emergency runs.

The New London Fire Department has 27 volunteer firefighters. We are not paid to be oncall but are oncall when available. When dispatched after a 911 call, available firefighters respond to the station to gear up with proper PPE (personal protective equipment) and respond to many different types of emergency calls. Keeping the trucks clean, keeping the station clean, keeping the grass mowed and having all the equipment and tools ready are all done through the volunteer efforts of the firefighters. They make me look good. They are all active in the community in many other ways. Coaches, teachers, volunteers at the parks and school and enthusiastic spectators.

When I first joined the fire service, there was a waiting list. That hasn't existed for years. We get together and discuss who might be a good fit for our department and then go recruit.

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Volunteerism isn't what it used to be. We have a good core of volunteers that have family in our community and are very civic minded. It's a team effort and I love my teammates.

This legislation I believe will be an attraction for potential firefighter prospects. We sacrifice a large part of our free time to become certified, stay certified, train and respond for our volunteer fire departments. The community needs us and we enjoy and take pride in serving. It has been an honor for me personally to have been a member of our department for over 40 years. Anything to attract my replacement would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for allowing me to testify on House Bill 143. On behalf of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association, I would encourage your support of the bill, and would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.