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2020 - 2021
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OHIO TOWNSHIP ASSOCIATION

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September 22, 2020

The Honorable Kristina D. Roegner, Chair
Ways and Means Committee
Ohio Senate
1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: SB 286 Firefighter Safety Gear Tax Credit

Dear Chair Roegner:

On behalf of the Ohio Township Association (OTA), I am writing to express our support for Senate Bill 286, which would authorize a nonrefundable income tax credit of up to \$500 for amounts spent by a volunteer firefighter to purchase safety protection gear.

Townships are heavily reliant on volunteers for safety services, especially firefighters. To provide a little perspective, volunteers comprise 71 percent of firefighters in the United States and save local communities of all sizes an estimated nearly \$140 billion a year. Of the total number of volunteer firefighters, 95 percent work in communities with a population of 25,000 or less.

However, recent reports demonstrate that the number of volunteer firefighters has drastically declined. Unfortunately, the increased cost of training and equipment is discouraging many individuals from volunteer service.

With the ranks of volunteer personnel declining but still critically needed, we encourage the state to provide incentives to these volunteers who risk their lives for little or no compensation. The cost of these incentives, like a tax credit for safety protection gear, would be minimal compared to the estimated cost savings provided by volunteer emergency services.

The OTA previously wrote to this committee in support of SB 190, which creates a similar tax credit for law enforcement officers that purchase additional safety equipment to be used on duty. The OTA backs the efforts of SB 286 just the same. Generally, tax relief would provide support for local safety services and an incentive for volunteers in safety service.

Senate Bill 286 would serve as an additional resource for townships and their employees. For this reason, the OTA supports SB 286 and encourages your favorable consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns about our position, please do not hesitate to contact me at 614-863-0045.

Sincerely,


Marisa Myers
Director of Governmental Affairs