



**JEAN SCHMIDT
STATE REPRESENTATIVE**

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee: Thank you for allowing me present sponsor testimony on House Bill 244, to provide funding to rebuild Goshen Township's Fire Department.

It would be hard for me to forget July 6, 2022, when a tornado touched down in my community. It would be even harder for the Goshen Fire Department. When the call came in that a tornado was approaching, a fireman ran to sound the alarm only to see the tornado coming right at him. He and others ran for cover and survived. The station did not.

It was an EF2 tornado that was 500 yards wide and swept through the town for 5 miles. Fortunately, there were no fatalities and only two injuries. However, hundreds of homes and business were damaged or destroyed, including the Goshen Fire Station 18. It is estimated that it will cost \$6.5 million to rebuild the station. The township and fire department do not have those resources in their budget.

Those whose homes or businesses were destroyed have had the opportunity to rebuild, many with the help of disaster relief assistance. Unfortunately, the fire department has not been able to tap into those funds yet. Goshen Township's fire department has been working out of a trailer and using a service garage nearby to house their trucks. For over a year, the men and women of the Goshen Fire Dept have worked tirelessly to respond to the needs of the township as efficiently as they can under these circumstances.

The Fire Dept was built in 1982 and building codes have changed over the past 40 years. The township qualifies for disaster relief funds; however, it has been working to overcome hurdles including up-to-date, compliant building plans and obtaining insurance coverage. Once those are established, disaster relief assistance will cap at 75% of eligible costs. This bill allocates \$2.5 million dollars, which the township does not have, to cover the left-over costs needed to rebuild.

Members of the Committee, I ask for your support in getting this bill passed. Goshen is a small and proud township that does not have the luxury of surplus funds to rebuild this fire station. We are not asking for a new and improved building to make it look better. We are asking for a building so that the fire department can operate efficiently and effectively, and our brave firefighters can do their job. Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.