

SUPPORT THE HOMETOWN HEROES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SF621 & HF377)

2021, It's about time to protect those who protect us every day

The PROBLEM: Firefighters suffer from alarmingly high rates of cardiac, emotional trauma and cancer issues. Unfortunately, many don't have access to the treatment they need.

- More than 93% of all Minnesota firefighters are designated as non-career/volunteers and don't qualify for the same health resources as full-time firefighters.
- The reality is ALL firefighters struggle with occupation-related health issues and need access to firefighter-centric well-being resources.
- After just THREE hours of fighting fires, firefighters experience hardened arteries and impaired heart function. With that level of health risk, EVERY firefighter deserves to be given the resources needed to address their health issues.

The SOLUTION: The Minnesota Legislature should pass the Hometown Heroes Assistance Program to ensure all of Minnesota's 20,000 firefighters have access to the care needed to handle a cardiac, emotional trauma or cancer diagnosis. The Hometown Heroes Assistance Program will:

- Provide a statewide "Critical Care" policy for all Minnesota firefighters which covers diagnoses of cancer or cardiac issues. Coverage amount is \$30,000 per diagnosis.
- Create a MnFIRE Assistance Program (MnAP) for all Minnesota firefighters targeting emotional trauma issues unique to the fire service.
- Ensure additional MnFIREAP support for firefighters who remain in need beyond initial treatment sessions.
- Support ongoing annual MnFIRE Awareness training for every Minnesota firefighter. Changing the current culture in the Minnesota Fire Service is integral to long-term reduction of the incidences of cancer, emotional trauma and cardiac.
- Sustain annual MnFIRE Awareness Training for medical doctors and mental health professionals statewide so all firefighters in Minnesota have regional access to informed and trained medical professionals to help with prevention, mitigation, diagnosis and treatment of cancer, cardiac and emotional trauma.

The Hometown Heroes Assistance Program will ensure ALL Minnesota firefighters can access the care they need for occupational health issues

The Numbers Don't Lie: There's a Health Crisis in Our Fire Service

- **12%** of all firefighters will develop heart disease at some point in their lives. Cardiovascular issues are by far the leading cause of officially recognized line-of-duty deaths.
- First responders contemplate suicide at a rate up to **10 times** higher than the general population. Recent studies have shown that **50%** of firefighters have thoughts about ending their life.
- **1 in 5** Minnesota fire departments reported at least one firefighter diagnosed with cancer; and **1 in 10** had multiple cancer cases.
- Minnesota ranks **48th** nationwide in per household spending for the fire service. Our firefighters deserve better.

We must confront the health issues facing Minnesota's fire service with the same bravery, determination and commitment our firefighters bring to protecting Minnesotans.

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