



TEXAS FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

"Serving the leaders of the Texas fire service"

www.txfirechiefs.org

9 August 2023

The Honorable John Cornyn
United States Senator for Texas
517 Hart Senate Office
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Bill 2024

Dear Senator Cornyn,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Texas Fire Chiefs Association regarding H.R. 4367/S. 2625, the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Bill for 2024.

The Texas Fire Chiefs Association (TFCA), established in 1988, provides professional fire and life safety leadership for the citizens of Texas by serving as one voice for over 1,100 chief fire officers in various cities, towns, and communities. The TFCA protects and serves the public trust at all times through integrity and professional leadership, and by developing a Best Practice program to encourage fire departments in Texas to seek continual improvement in their services to their local community.

The Senate Committee on Appropriations released its report on the bill on July 27, 2023. The committee report reduced funding for the Assistance to Firefighter Grants (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grants by \$21.6 million each compared to the previous fiscal year. Due to the vital importance of these funds to support public safety and the safety of emergency responders, the Texas Fire Chiefs Association requests that you consider restoring funding to \$360 million for each of these Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-administered grant programs.

The AFG program provides direct financial assistance to fire departments, emergency medical services organizations, and state fire training academies to support critical training and equipment. These investments support emergency personnel to meet recognized standards, enhance operational efficiencies, foster interoperability, and support community resilience. During the 2021 grant cycle, 91 Texas fire departments received over a combined \$19.4 million from the AFG program.

Texas Fire Departments have put these federal funds to work, investing in incident command training and vehicle exhaust removal systems, because injuries and fatalities on emergency scenes are often attributed to the lack of robust incident command processes. In addition, apparatus and vehicles in the fire service release carcinogenic fumes, which have contributed to an alarming rate of firefighter cancer nationwide. Texas departments have invested in firefighter medical physical examinations and other wellness initiatives-- in protecting the public, firefighters face unique occupational risks, including cardiovascular demands in addition to cancer risk,. Other Texas departments have used the funding to procure self-contained breathing apparatus, essential in firefighting operations. The financial support from the AFG program has enabled a number of Texas Fire Departments to provide necessary levels of protection to their emergency responders and to the public.



The SAFER grant program supports the recruitment, hiring, and retention of firefighters in accordance to staffing, response, and operational standards established by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). FEMA awarded over \$32.8 million to support 18 Texas departments. SAFER grants assist with the need for additional frontline personnel as the Texas population served continues to grow.

We are willing to provide any additional information to you and your staff regarding the significant impacts of this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Paul Henley
President, Texas Fire Chiefs Association
Fire Chief, Flower Mound Fire Department

cc: Governor Greg Abbott
Lt Governor Dan Patrick
Speaker Dade Phelan
Texas Office of State and Federal Relations

