



MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF TOWNSHIPS AGENCY

Minnesota Association of Townships Insurance & Bond Trust (MATIT)

Agency Manager:
Jon Mocol

General Counsel:
Steve Fenske

Underwriting Assistant:
Dawn Zimmerman
Agency Assistant:
Angela Hendrickson

Claim Administrator:
Deb Provence

March 8, 2021

Commissioner Roslyn Robertson
Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry
443 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155
By email – Kate.Perushek@state.mn.us

Re: WCAC Consideration of Legislative Proposals SF 1035 and HF 1730

Dear Commissioner Robertson and Members of the Workers' Compensation Advisory Council:

At MATIT we would like to address Senate File 1035 and House File 1730, with regards for presumptions for fire fighters contracting Cancer. While we recognize and appreciate the valiant efforts of our fire departments in keeping our communities safe from fire, we are opposed to this bill. Our reasons for opposing this is that our rural fire departments both in townships have volunteer fire fighters, so

We represent many rural fire departments that serve Minnesota Townships. In this we see that most of their fire personal are volunteer and that they have other full-time positions. Some of these other positions that they are working expose them to carcinogens that could also play a part in the contraction of cancer. Also, some of our rural fire fighters may never had to respond to a fire call, but this bill would automatically cover their cancer if they contracted it.

Also, one must consider what is the cost to the risk pools that cover these workers, as we have had a conversation and there is little to no coverage from the commercial carriers for workers' compensation coverage for fire fighters, the government risk pools and municipalities cover this directly. Where do our contributions (premiums) come from is directly from the taxpayers who fund these claims through property tax. These same taxpayers are paying for the workers' compensation claims, plus if the individual is permanently disabled, the taxpayers are having to pay out the PERA benefits, which again comes from the taxpayers.

If this presumption moves forward, it would be appropriate to provide funding for the tools to help mitigate the claims that come in. Some of those issues are rural fire departments do not have the extractor washing machines, so grant money for those would help to mitigate the carcinogens from staying in the turnout gear. Additional funding for turnout gear, the recommended life is 10 years, or 4 times being washed in an extractor. Also provide funding for Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), in some of smaller rural departments they do not have the funding to keep these current and that can also be a contributing factor in the carcinogens entering the body and causing cancer.

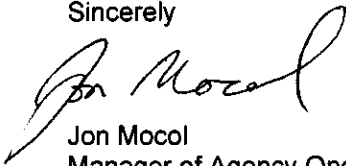
As we travel around the state, there are conversations with our members about the services that they provide for fire protection and where they are obtaining them from. They are townships on the borders that are purchasing fire services from our neighboring states because the costs that they are charged from

Minnesota Fire Departments are exponentially higher.

At MATIT we do want to make sure that we take care of our members and recognize that there are cases where cancer is a direct correlation to a fire fighters' exposure to carcinogens, but we feel that this is our responsibility to make sure we properly cover our workers in our covered communities. We are responsible to the employee, the communities that we serve and the taxpayers. If there is a case that was caused by carcinogen at the fire, we need to and will take responsibility for that.

In conclusion, our members need and want their fire fighters to be healthy and safe. It is how townships serve their constituents, it is how they efficiently manage taxpayer dollars, and it is how they fulfill their commitment to protecting people who are their colleagues, and often their neighbors and friends as well. How to best accomplish deserves a fuller and more considered evaluation.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Mocol". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

Jon Mocol
Manager of Agency Operations
Minnesota Association of Townships