



May 24, 2023

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz:

On behalf of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) and the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), we express our support for provisions in the Railway Safety Act of 2023 (S.576) to allow the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's (PHMSA) Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) grants to be distributed through the states to local jurisdictions.

The legislation would ensure that 70% of HMEP funds be allocated to local fire and EMS departments; local governments; tribal organizations; and regional and local hazardous materials response programs. These grants fund planning, training, and equipment to help local communities and regional organizations prepare for hazardous materials incidents. The local first responders and regional hazmat teams are the first to arrive on scene in a hazmat incident, so taxpayer funds are best spent meeting their critical needs.

We thank you for your work on supporting efforts to help PHMSA fund local first responders and local hazardous materials emergency response programs. This change ensures that these grant funds will be used to help local jurisdictions prepare for hazardous materials incidents. Consequently, guaranteeing that our first responders are funded in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

Fire Chief Donna M. Black, EFO, CFO
President and Board Chair
International Association of Fire Chiefs

Edward A. Kelly
General President
International Association of Fire Fighters

Fire Chief Steven W. Hirsch
Chair
National Volunteer Fire Council

cc: The Honorable J.D. Vance, U.S. Senator

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