



PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS OF VERMONT

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To: Chairwoman Hardy

From: Christopher Dube, President

Date: March 12, 2024

Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 96 - Privatization

The Professional Firefighters of Vermont (PFFV) stand in support of this bill. My testimony is given from the national perspective as it relates to fire and EMS services.

- Private Fire Services in the country are seen mostly in the Mid-West and Western States. These companies provide fire protection to un-incorporated towns and villages, often times at competing prices from neighboring municipal departments. They are also used in the western states during wild fire season, many times contracted by insurance companies.
- EMS is also an entity that is privatized by municipalities.
- Issues we have seen:
 - These companies often times employ people at a lower rate per hour with little to no benefits. They typically do not provide good health care or pension benefits such as defined benefit retirement.
 - These companies have a fairly high amount of turnover of employees
 - Many times employees are mis-classified and taken on as "Private Contractors" unbeknownst to the employee

- Other issues that have been seen in public safety revolve around the level of professionalism and the lower degree of services provided. With respect to wild fires and contracted fire protection, often times these companies come in and only protect buildings where owners have paid for the service, ignoring neighboring residences. This has lead to confusion as people see the emergency apparatus thinking that they are there for fire suppression/ protection and will provide assistance to everyone, when, in fact that is not the case.
- Other issues that have been experienced is that when a service is out sourced through a private contract and those employees are often times employed at a lower wage, this has a domino effect within the community/area. This is issue that has a broader effect on the community and economics in general.

We support this bill as it will provide protections for current workers, putting restrictions on the reduction of current workforce. Mandates that private contractors provide pay parity to their employees for the work being performed and addresses the issue of benefits, which are often times overlooked and much less then comparable workers in state or local governments.

Private contracts should be made for the sole purpose of cutting cost on the backs of workers. Should private contracts be awarded it should be to augment, not reduce the quality of work or to cut costs.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher M. Dube". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christopher M. Dube, President

Professional Firefighters of Vermont