



PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS OF VERMONT

PO Box 831 - Montpelier, Vermont - 05601 - Phone (800) 305-5510 - Fax (800) 309-7566

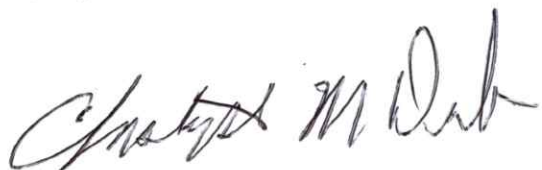
Dear Chair Wood and Chair Lyons,

I am writing on behalf of the Professional Fire Fighters of Vermont to voice our support for H.72, An Act Related to Harm-Reduction Criminal Justice Response to Drug Use. Our members support this bill for a variety of reasons. First, as professionals dedicated to saving lives, we believe that Overdose Prevention Centers (OPCs) will save lives. Second, we believe that this will help with the issue of discarded needles in the communities we serve. Finally, overdoses have become an increasing part of our work, taxing our members in ways we have never seen before.

We are here to protect people and save lives, but we are increasingly dedicating a disproportionate amount of time responding to these calls. We believe that much of this burden could be relieved if we had trained personnel capable of intervening immediately at the site of overdoses, at the time of the overdose, and OPCs would provide for that. According to data from Burlington, there were over 350 responses to overdoses in 2022 and over 200 in only the first half of 2023. <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/sites/default/files/u585/Opioids-BTVstat-June%202023.pdf> This represents significant increases from previous years and we see similar pressures in other parts of the state adding to our struggle to recruit and retain firefighters.

We hope that with the passage of H. 72 Vermont can help save lives and relieve some of the growing burdens on our members. We will always stand ready to help, and H.72 provides another tool to address this ongoing crisis. For these reasons, we support passage of this important bill this session.

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christopher M. Dube". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Best,".

Christopher M. Dube
President, Professional Fire Fighters of Vermont