



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

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HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
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February 3, 2014

The Honorable Mark Nakashima, Chair
Committee on Labor
House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 406
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Nakashima:

Subject: H.B. 1705 Relating to Firefighters

I am Manuel P. Neves, Chair of the Hawaii State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of the Honolulu Fire Department (HFD). The SFC and the HFD support H.B. 1705, which proposes to provide fire fighters with comprehensive medical coverage and service-connected disability retirement benefits for certain medical conditions that are presumed to arise out of and in the course of their employment.

Thirty-three states and eight Canadian provinces currently have cancer presumptive laws that provide fire fighters with medical and service-connected disability benefits. Numerous studies have proven that the risk of being diagnosed with cancer is higher among fire fighters than the general population. In a three-year study completed in 2005 by the University of Cincinnati, an analysis was completed based on information of 110,000 fire fighters. The study concluded that fire fighters face a greater risk of 20 different types of cancer than any other work group. Fire fighters are exposed to many compounds designated as carcinogens by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, including benzene, diesel engine exhaust, chloroform, soot, styrene, and formaldehyde. These substances can be inhaled or absorbed through the skin, and the fire fighter's protective equipment does not always prevent exposures. In addition, fire fighters are exposed to infectious diseases and biochemical substances with exposure to patient care and bioterrorism events, respectively.

The Honorable Mark Nakashima, Chair
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February 3, 2014

Treatment may take years and costs may exceed the financial resources of fire fighters and their families. In the unfortunate event that a fire fighter cannot return to duty, this bill will provide a disability retirement and benefits for their family.

The SFC and the HFD strongly urge your support for the passage of H.B. 1705.

Should you have questions, please contact SFC Administrator Socrates Bratakos at 723-7105 or sbratakos@honolulu.gov.

Sincerely,



MANUEL P. NEVES
Chair

MPN/LR:clc

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR



BARBARA A. KRIEG
DIRECTOR

LEILA A. KAGAWA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
235 S. BERETANIA STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2437

February 1, 2014

**TESTIMONY TO THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT**

For Hearing on Tuesday, February 4, 2014
9:00 a.m., Conference Room 309

BY

BARBARA A. KRIEG
DIRECTOR

**House Bill No. 1705
Relating to Firefighters**

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

TO CHAIRPERSON MARK NAKASHIMA AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on H.B. 1705.

The purpose of H.B. 1705 is to provide firefighters with comprehensive medical coverage through workers compensation law and service connected disability retirement benefits through a presumptive law for cancer, blood-borne infectious diseases, and exposure to a biochemical substance.

The Department of Human Resources Development (DHRD) has a fiduciary duty to administer the State's self-insured workers' compensation program and its expenditure of public funds.

DHRD submits the following comments on this bill.

First, this bill is unnecessary because Section 386-85, HRS, already creates a presumption that a claim for workers' compensation benefits is for a covered work injury. Section 386-3, HRS, is broadly construed and includes personal injury either by accident arising out of and in the course of the employment or by disease proximately

caused by or resulting from the nature of the employment. These provisions would also apply to a firefighter's claim for cancer, leukemia, blood-borne infectious disease, or methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus skin infection. An injured employee with a compensable work injury is eligible for the full array of benefits provided in the workers' compensation law, including medical, indemnity, and other benefits.

Second, we are concerned that this bill appears to create a different standard for an employer to overcome the presumption of compensability if there are non-industrial causes for the injury. Section 386-85, HRS, already provides that the presumption can only be rebutted by "substantial evidence to the contrary." As demonstrated in legions of Disability Compensation Division, Labor and Industrial Relations Appeals Board, Hawaii Intermediate Court of Appeals decisions, and the recent Hawaii Supreme Court case involving a vog-related claim for workers' compensation benefits, this "substantial evidence" standard is a very high standard for employers to overcome.

Finally, we note that Section 386-82, HRS, exempts certain exposure-type claims from the normal two-year statute of limitations for filing a workers' compensation claim. This exemption applies to claims for injury caused by occupational exposure to minerals or substances with carcinogenic properties and exposure to radioactive substances. Claims for such injuries can be filed up to two years after knowledge that the injury was proximately caused by, or resulted from the nature of, the employment. This provides an added safeguard for injured employees or their families to file claims when the work-relatedness of such injuries is not readily apparent.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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KIRK CALDWELL
MAYOR



CAROLEE C. KUBO
DIRECTOR

NOEL T. ONO
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

February 4, 2014

The Honorable Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
and Members of the Committee
on Labor and Public Employment
House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 406
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Nakashima and Members of the Committee:

SUBJECT: House Bill No. 1705, Relating to Firefighters

The purpose of H.B. 1705 is to provide firefighters with comprehensive medical coverage through workers compensation law and service connected disability retirement benefits through a presumptive law for cancer, blood-borne infectious diseases, and exposure to a biochemical substance. The City and County of Honolulu offers the following comments with respect to the bill.

Although the City appreciates the intent of H.B. 1705, we note that Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) Section 386-85 already provides that injuries sustained under the conditions set forth in the measure are presumed covered for workers' compensation purposes in the absence of substantial evidence to the contrary. As a result, the presumption provided for in subsection (a) of the measure is duplicative and unnecessary.

We also have concerns about the language of subsection (b) which provides that "[t]he compensation that is awarded for cancer shall include full hospital, surgical, medical treatment, disability indemnity and death benefits." Insofar as these specific benefits are already provided for under HRS Chapter 386, we are unclear as to the intended purpose of this section and would defer additional comment pending further clarification.

Finally, we question the need for including a specific standard for overcoming the presumption as provided for in subsection (c) of the bill. There is already a myriad of caselaw indicating the requirements needed to meet the "substantial evidence" standard provided for in HRS Section 386-85. Adding a different standard for a limited set of injuries sustained by a finite group of individuals therefore appears to be both needless and excessive.

The City and County of Honolulu believes that although well-intentioned, H.B. 1705 is redundant and unnecessary given the current framework of Hawaii's workers' compensation laws.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolee C. Kubo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Carolee C. Kubo
Director

ALAN M. ARAKAWA
MAYOR



JEFFREY A. MURRAY
CHIEF

ROBERT M. SHIMADA
DEPUTY CHIEF

COUNTY OF MAUI
DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

200 DAIRY ROAD
KAHULUI, MAUI, HAWAII 96732
(808) 270-7561
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EMAIL: fire.dept@mauicounty.gov

February 3, 2014

The Honorable Mark Nakashima, Chair
Committee on Labor
House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 406
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Chair Nakashima:

Subject: H.B. 1705 Relating to Firefighters

I am Jeffrey A. Murray, Member of the Hawaii State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of the County of Maui, Department of Fire & Public Safety (MFD). The SFC and the MFD support H.B. 1705, which proposes to provide fire fighters with comprehensive medical coverage and service-connected disability retirement benefits for certain medical conditions that are presumed to arise out of and in the course of their employment.

Thirty-three states and eight Canadian provinces currently have cancer presumptive laws that provide fire fighters with medical and service-connected disability benefits. Numerous studies have proven that the risk of being diagnosed with cancer is higher among fire fighters than the general population. In a three-year study completed in 2005 by the University of Cincinnati, an analysis was completed based on information of 110,000 fire fighters. The study concluded that fire fighters face a greater risk of 20 different types of cancer than any other work group. Fire fighters are exposed to many compounds designated as carcinogens by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, including benzene, diesel engine exhaust, chloroform, soot, styrene, and formaldehyde. These substances can be inhaled or absorbed through the skin, and the fire fighter's protective equipment does not always prevent exposures. In addition, fire fighters are exposed to infectious diseases and biochemical substances with exposure to patient care and bioterrorism events, respectively.

The Honorable Mark Nakashima, Chair
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Treatment may take years and costs may exceed the financial resources of fire fighters and their families. In the unfortunate event that a fire fighter cannot return to duty, this bill will provide a disability retirement and benefits for their family.

The SFC and the MFD strongly urge your support for the passage of H.B. 1705.

Should you have questions, please contact SFC Administrator Socrates Bratakos at 723-7105 or sbratakos@honolulu.gov.

Sincerely,



JEFFREY A. MURRAY
Fire Cheif

William P. Kenoi
Mayor



Darren J. Rosario
Fire Chief

Renwick J. Victorino
Deputy Fire Chief

County of Hawai'i
HAWAI'I FIRE DEPARTMENT
25 Aupuni Street • Suite 2501 • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720
(808) 932-2900 • Fax (808) 932-2928

February 3, 2014

The Honorable Mark Nakashima, Chair
Committee on Labor & Public Employment
House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 309
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Nakashima:

Subject: H.B. 1705 Relating to Firefighters

I am Darren J. Rosario, Member of the Hawai'i State Fire Council (SFC) and Fire Chief of the Hawai'i Fire Department (HCFD). The SFC and the HCFD support H.B. 1705, which proposes to provide fire fighters with comprehensive medical coverage and service-connected disability retirement benefits for certain medical conditions that are presumed to arise out of and in the course of their employment.

Over half of the States in our country currently have cancer presumptive laws that provide fire fighters with medical and service-connected disability benefits. The risk of cancer is higher among fire fighters than the general population according to several studies. The University of Cincinnati completed a study based on information regarding 110,000 fire fighters. The study concluded that fire fighters face a greater risk of 20 different types of cancer than any other work group. During responses to fire related incidents, fire fighters are exposed to many compounds including benzene, diesel engine exhaust, chloroform, soot, styrene, and formaldehyde. These substances can be inhaled or absorbed through the skin, and the fire fighter's protective equipment does not always prevent exposures. These compounds are deemed as Carcinogens by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. In addition, The HCFD fire fighters are exposed to infectious diseases and biochemical substances with exposure to patient care and bioterrorism events, respectively on a daily basis. The HCFD is the only County fire department that provides transport Advanced Life Support ambulance services.



The Honorable Mark Nakashima, Chair
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Treatment of Cancer or illness attributed to Blood Borne Pathogen exposure may take years and costs may exceed the financial resources of fire fighters and their families. In the unfortunate event that a fire fighter cannot return to duty, this bill will provide a disability retirement and benefits for their family.

The SFC and the HCFD strongly urge your support for the passage of H.B. 1705.

Should you have questions, please contact my office at 808(932-2903) or fire@co.hawaii.hi.us

Sincerely,



DARREN J. ROSARIO
Fire Chief
SFC Member

TESTIMONY BY WESLEY K. MACHIDA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
STATE OF HAWAII

TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 1705

February 4, 2014. 9:00 A.M.

RELATING TO FIREFIGHTERS

Chair Nakashima and Members of the Committee:

H.B. 1705 proposes to amend section 88-79, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), relating to Employees' Retirement System (ERS) service-connected disability retirement, to create a presumption that a firefighter who suffers cancer, a blood-borne infectious disease, or exposure to a biochemical substance, contracted such condition during the actual performance of duty. If a firefighter is permanently incapacitated for duty by any of such conditions and complies with the other requirements of section 88-79, HRS, the firefighter would be eligible to receive service-connected disability retirement benefits.

The Administrative and Legislative Committee of the Board of Trustees of the ERS strongly opposes this bill.

Section 88-79, HRS, provides for service-connected disability benefits for a member who is permanently incapacitated for duty as the natural and proximate result of an accident occurring while in the actual performance of duty or as the cumulative result of an occupational hazard. Section 88-79, HRS, already includes a rebuttable presumption that firefighters, police officers and sewer workers who are permanently incapacitated for duty as a result of any disease of the heart, lungs, or respiratory system, contracted such disease while in the performance of duty and as the result of the inherent occupational hazard of exposure to smoke inhalation, toxic gases, chemical fumes, and other toxic vapors. This bill would expand the presumption for firefighters and make it easier to obtain service-connected disability retirement benefits because a firefighter suffering from cancer, a blood-borne infectious disease or exposure to a biochemical substance would not have to prove that such condition was contracted in the actual performance of duty.

Service-connected disability retirement benefits are usually higher than regular retirement benefits. By making it easier to obtain higher benefits, this bill would result in the enhancement of benefits, which would be contrary to Act 29, Session Laws of Hawaii 2011, which placed a moratorium on benefit enhancements until the ERS becomes fully funded. Any benefit enhancement would increase the State and county contributions to the ERS and would increase the ERS's unfunded liability.

The presumptions created by this bill are also overly broad. The bill does not exclude pre-existing conditions, does not clearly provide for rebuttal of the presumptions relating to blood-borne infectious disease or biochemical substances or require any evidence of exposure to either blood borne infectious disease or biochemical substances. For example, under this bill, a firefighter who suffers from a blood-borne infectious disease could receive service-connected disability retirement benefits even if the disease was contracted as the result of a blood transfusion completely unrelated to the firefighter's work. The proposed cancer presumption requires evidence of exposure to a known carcinogen that is reasonably linked to the disabling cancer. The existing presumption for heart, lung or respiratory disease is rebuttable and excludes conditions existing pre-employment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

TESTIMONY OF JANICE FUKUDA

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT
Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair

February 4, 2014
9:00 a.m.

HB 1705

Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Yamashita, and members of the Committee, my name is Janice Fukuda, Assistant Vice President, Workers' Compensation Claims at First Insurance, testifying on behalf of Hawaii Insurers Council. Hawaii Insurers Council is a non-profit trade association of property and casualty insurance companies licensed to do business in Hawaii. Member companies underwrite approximately one third of all property and casualty insurance premiums in the state.

Hawaii Insurers Council **opposes** this bill.

The proposed language specifies descriptive conditions under which a firefighter would be entitled to Workers Compensation benefits. This bill also attempts to establish a special statute of limitations to file a claim.

HRS 386-3 Injuries covered states that "If an employee suffers personal injury either by accident arising out of and in the course of the employment or by disease proximately caused by or resulting from the nature of the employment, the employee's employer or the special compensation fund shall pay compensation to the employee or the employee's dependents as provided in this chapter." We believe this language addresses illnesses referenced in this bill that may arise in the course and scope of employment.

The provision in HRS 386-85 Presumptions requires the employer to provide substantial evidence to the contrary to refute whether an injury or illness arose in the course and scope of employment. The proposed language in this bill regarding presumption conflicts with the presumption clause and dictates the decision making authority of the Appeals Board. This denies the employer due process to challenge a claim for compensation.

The bill also attempts to define the type of treatment under “(b) The compensation that is awarded for cancer shall include full hospital, surgical, medical treatment, disability indemnity, and death benefits.” Employers should not be liable for any treatment that is not medically reasonable or necessary and for experimental treatment. This section is contrary to HRS 386-21 and the Workers Compensation Medical Fee Schedule. Furthermore, death benefits should not automatically be awarded when the cause of death may be unrelated to the compensable injury.

HRS 386-82 Claim for Compensation; limitation of time specifically addresses exposures to carcinogens and does not require years of service as a prerequisite to file a claim. We believe the concern this bill attempts to address is already covered in HRS 386 and that the provisions in this bill is problematic due to conflicts with various other sections in HRS 386.

For these reasons we ask that this bill be held.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

yamashita1

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Friday, January 31, 2014 9:31 AM
To: LABtestimony
Cc: mendezj@hawaii.edu
Subject: *Submitted testimony for HB1705 on Feb 4, 2014 09:00AM*

HB1705

Submitted on: 1/31/2014

Testimony for LAB on Feb 4, 2014 09:00AM in Conference Room 309

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Javier Mendez-Alvarez	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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To: Hawaii State Legislature

From Julian K. Romero



Aloha, I am writing in regards to HB1705

In September of 2013, my brother, Battalion Chief Louis Romero of the Maui County Fire Department was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia at 44 years of age. It was a shock to our entire family. There is no one in our immediate family that has ever been diagnosed with cancer. My mother commented to me that she thought that it was work related. I did a quick internet search of firefighters and Acute Myeloid Leukemia, (AML). Low and behold, there were numerous cases of firefighters with AML Leukemia. Exposure to benzene is a risk factor for this form of leukemia. Benzene is found in smoke and diesel exhaust, both of which firefighters deal with on a regular basis. I also learned that there are all types of cancers that firefighters are being diagnosed with, at a rate that exceeds that of the general population. In fact, firefighters have a 100 percent higher chance of getting many types of cancers. While investigating further, I learned about Firefighter Cancer Presumption Laws. I was amazed at how the other states in America have laws that take care of their ill and fallen firefighters. I was equally amazed by the lack of care that we have in Hawaii for our firefighters.

A few months ago I walked into my brother's room at the Queens Hospital Cancer Center. As I walked in I saw my brother being embraced and consoled by his wife. He was concerned about paying for his treatment, and more importantly, he was concerned with what would happen to his family and four young children if he could not survive the disease. If he lived in the Mainland, his treatment would be covered by worker's compensation, and his pension would not be severely decreased at death, as it would be in Hawaii.

While researching firefighter and AML Leukemia on the internet, I came across a story of firefighter Shane McCready of the Brampton City Fire Department. The headline of the article read, "Firefighter Dies from Line Of Duty Illness." At 37 years of age, Firefighter McCready had just lost his battle with AML Leukemia. The same disease that my brother is fighting in Hawaii. In Brampton, you get this

type of cancer, and it is considered work related. But in Hawaii, it is just considered coincidence. We need to change this and we need to protect our firefighters. Firefighters who courageously put their life on the line to protect our lives and our property. Hawaii firefighters should have Cancer Presumptive Laws that are comparable to their peers on the mainland. They are our neighbors, our brothers and sisters, our sons and daughters, and they deserve to be cared for with Cancer Presumptive Laws that are on par with their colleagues in the mainland.



HAWAII FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS LOCAL 1463, AFL-CIO
1018 PALM DRIVE, HONOLULU, HAWAII 96814-1929
TELEPHONE (808) 949-1566 FAX: (808) 952-6003
WEBSITE: www.hawaiifirefighters.org

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2014
February 4, 2014



Committee on Labor and Public Employment

Testimony by
Hawaii Fire Fighters Association

H.B. No. 1705 Relating to Fire Fighters

My name is Robert H. Lee and I am the President of the Hawaii Fire Fighters Association (HFFA), Local 1463, IAFF, AFL-CIO. The HFFA represents approximately 2,100 active-duty professional fire fighters throughout the State. We strongly support the intent of H.B. No. 1705, which proposes a presumptive eligibility for fire fighters in cases of service connected disability due to cancer, blood-borne infectious diseases and exposure to biochemical substances

In 2013, a study was published in the Occupational and Environmental Medicine which is one of the largest studies undertaken among a population of 30,000 fire fighters in Philadelphia, Chicago and San Francisco. The study identified higher incident rates of cancer compared to the general U.S. population. These findings are consistent with previous, smaller studies assessing the cancer risk in fire fighters which further supports HFFA and the International Association of Fire Fighters' position that fire fighters are at increased risk of cancer as well as blood and airborne transmissible diseases due to occupational exposure.

HFFA recognizes that there may be concerns from the stakeholders and we look forward to working together to address the issues identified in H.B. No. 1705.

February 3, 2014

The Honorable Mark Nakashima, Chair
Committee on Labor
House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 406
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

LATE

Dear Chair Nakashima:

Subject: H.B. 1705 Relating to Firefighters

My name is Garrett K. Kim, I am Hawaii Director of the Firefighter Cancer Support Network and Captain at the Honoka'a fire station on the Island of Hawaii. I am writing in support of H.B. 1705 which would provide medical coverage and disability retirement benefits for certain medical conditions that are presumed to arise out of the course of their employment.

Being very fit and living a healthy lifestyle with virtually no cancer history in my family, it came as a huge surprise to be diagnosed with an extremely rare cancer at 42 years old, Esthesioneuroblastoma. Though my expected 5 year survival rate was 14%, a combination of lucky timing and excellent treatment at Stanford Cancer Center got my cancer under control and allowed me to return to work. Unfortunately a good outcome is not always the case. I recently lost a good friend and fellow firefighter after a long hard battle with cancer.

Numerous studies have shown that firefighters are at increased risk for many types of cancers. Cancer is now the leading cause of death for firefighters nationwide. The cause of these cancers can be directly attributed to the exposure of numerous carcinogens in the course of our duties as firefighters. The IARC, which is a branch of the World Health Organization, has identified 11-group 1 carcinogens in fire smoke. Diesel exhaust is another group 1 carcinogen that Firefighters are exposed to on a daily basis. Group 1 carcinogens are Known Cancer Causing Substances of which only a little over 100 have been identified.

Please support the firefighters that knowingly place their lives at risk for the safety of others. This bill would provide much needed support to firefighters and their families during their darkest hours. On behalf of the Firefighters of Hawaii, we ask for your support of H.B. 1705.

Thank you for your time,

Garrett K. Kim
Hawaii Director FireFighter Cancer Support Network
Captain, Honoka'a, Hawaii Fire Department
808-937-8321

To: Hawaii State Legislature, Committee on Labor & Public
Employment

LATE

Hearing on Tuesday, February 04, 2014 @ 9:00 AM

My name is Louis P. Romero and I am a Battalion Chief with the County of Maui, Department of Fire and Public Service. On September 27, 2013 on my 44th birthday, I was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia. I have been a firefighter for the past 23 years and in my career I have been exposed to compounds known to cause cancer. Some common by products of combustion are benzene, carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, soot and diesel engine exhaust. Some of these chemicals can be inhaled or they can be absorbed through the skin.

I live a healthy lifestyle, I am a non smoker, I have never abused drugs or alcohol, eat well and exercise regularly. I also have no familial link to cancer. After receiving my diagnosis, it took a great deal of time to process and to figure out how I would fight this disease head on. My Oncologist asked many extensive questions about my lifestyle, my family history and my occupation. He was very interested in knowing if I had a high exposure risk to hazardous chemicals as part of my job. He also relayed that there may be a connection with the exposures and my current cancer diagnosis. Being a newly diagnosed cancer patient, I did research to help me find information on treatments as well as causes of cancer. During this research I found out through a joint study involving the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the United States Fire Academy in collaboration with the National Cancer Institute and the University of California at Davis

Department of Public Health Sciences that firefighters are at greater risk of developing cancer than the general public.

Given this crucial information, I respectfully request your support in improving Hawaii's presumptive cancer laws for firefighters. In our career, we risk our lives to serve the public. With new research confirming that firefighters are more at risk of developing cancer, we need to take a more proactive approach in protecting our longevity in this rewarding occupation. I will fight this illness with every ounce of strength that I have and ask that you help protect my brother firefighters who might develop cancer in the future. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Louis P. Romero, Battalion Chief