

March 29, 2023

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

I am writing to encourage you to act swiftly to secure passage of the *Fire Grants and Safety Act* in the U.S. Senate.<sup>1</sup> The two federal grant programs supported by the bill – the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant program – have awarded over \$270 million since 2015 to Massachusetts fire departments serving their local communities.<sup>2</sup> The grants are expected to expire next year, and I urge you to work to pass this bill without delay to ensure that fire departments can continue to receive the federal support they need without interruption.

Massachusetts fire departments have a strong history of securing AFG and SAFER grants to support their local firefighting and emergency response duties. Municipalities in Massachusetts use federal grant funding for firefighter training, CPR devices, and firefighter extrication equipment.<sup>3</sup> Many of our fire departments, including in North Adams, Wilbraham, Orleans, Northborough, Ayer, Lynn, and Newton all benefited from these federal investments that supported their dedicated efforts to keep our Commonwealth's communities safe.<sup>4</sup>

Just last month, the Hingham Fire Department received an AFG grant of over \$100,000 to purchase life-saving emergency response medical equipment.<sup>5</sup> In September 2022, the AFG

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<sup>1</sup> Fire Grants and Safety Act, S.559, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/559>.

<sup>2</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Staffing For Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER)," March 24, 2023, <https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/firefighters/safer>; Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Assistance to Firefighter Grants," March 24, 2023, <https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/firefighters/assistance-grants>.

<sup>3</sup> Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, "Senators Warren, Markey and Massachusetts Delegation Announce Over \$2 Million in Funding for Massachusetts Fire Departments," press release, August 25, 2022, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/senators-warren-markey-and-massachusetts-delegation-announce-over-2-million-in-funding-for-massachusetts-fire-departments>; WWLP, "Feds award \$13-million in grants to Massachusetts fire departments," Amy Phillips, September 18, 2019, <https://www.wwlp.com/news/feds-award-13-million-in-grants-to-massachusetts-fire-departments/>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*; Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Assistance to Firefighter Grants," <https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/firefighters/assistance-grants>.

<sup>5</sup> Hingham, Massachusetts, "Fire Department Awarded Federal Assistance to Firefighters Grant," press release, February 14, 2023, <https://www.hingham-ma.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=1528>.

program awarded the Essex Fire Department about \$200,000 to purchase protective gear for its firefighters.<sup>6</sup>

Our brave frontline responders have also used SAFER funds to support the recruitment, training, and retention of personnel. I previously announced in 2019 that nine fire departments that worked to secure a grant from SAFER succeeded in receiving those federal funds to hire over 30 new firefighters.<sup>7</sup> In another example, Belchertown announced late last year that it would receive over \$1 million from SAFER to hire new firefighters.<sup>8</sup> The program awarded the Worcester Fire Department in the Commonwealth's second largest city over \$14 million to support the salaries of 60 firefighters over three years.<sup>9</sup> Federal funding from these grants have been critical to keeping our towns and cities safe.

Fire departments across Massachusetts consistently apply for SAFER and AFG grants, and I expect they will continue to do so in upcoming years. I strongly support the work of these fire departments in protecting our communities and hope to see the robust funding necessary to keep these programs going. Congress as a whole should also express its support, and we can show that by passing the *Fire Grants and Safety Act* to reauthorize these programs and sustain this important funding.

I encourage you to push for speedy consideration and passage of the *Fire Grants and Safety Act* in the U.S. Senate and hope to see continued resources to support brave firefighters serving in our communities.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,



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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

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<sup>6</sup> Town of Essex, Massachusetts, "Essex Fire received Assistance to Firefighter Grant for sum of \$207,809.52," press release, September 15, 2022, <https://www.essexma.org/home/news/essex-fire-received-assistance-firefighter-grant-sum-20780952>.

<sup>7</sup> Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, "Massachusetts Lawmakers Announce Approximately \$5.4 Million in Federal Assistance to Massachusetts Fire Departments," press release, September 13, 2019, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/massachusetts-lawmakers-announce-approximately-54-million-in-federal-assistance-to-massachusetts-fire-departments>.

<sup>8</sup> The Reminder, "Grant will expand Belchertown Fire Department staffing," Chris Maza, October 12, 2022, <https://www.there minder.com/localnews/belchertown/grant-will-expand-belchertown-fire-department-staf/>.

<sup>9</sup> Telegram & Gazette, "FEMA promises \$14.1M for 60 new Worcester firefighters; another \$800K to be used for equipment," Cyrus Moulton, September 26, 2022, <https://www.telegram.com/story/news/2022/09/26/fema-promises-14-1-m-60-new-firefighters-worcester-fire-department/8118794001/>.