

February 9, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, and Leader Jeffries,

As Congress considers the upcoming fiscal year (FY) 2024 legislation, our organizations urge you to include provisions to reauthorize key fire service grant programs—the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) and the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) programs—as well as the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA). We are pleased that the reauthorization of AFG, SAFER, and USFA has strong, bipartisan support in both chambers. It is imperative that the Fire Grants and Safety Act (S. 870/H.R. 4090) be included in the FY24 appropriations package to ensure it becomes law before AFG and SAFER expire.

All across the country, local fire departments of all types and sizes do not have enough staff, training, personal protective clothing, breathing apparatus, and other equipment. AFG and SAFER help ensure fire and emergency services personnel in the U.S. are properly trained, staffed, and equipped to protect their communities. These programs improve response capabilities across all emergency response areas—from fires to medical aid and hazardous materials response. AFG and SAFER are a lifeline to departments of all types—career, combination, and volunteer. Sadly, the authorization for these programs lapsed at the end of FY2023, and they now face a statutory sunset on September 30, 2024. As our nation’s fire and emergency service continues to face an ever-growing number of calls for service and all-hazards responses, Congress cannot allow the two largest forms of federal support to disappear. Without these programs, our communities will be ill-prepared to respond to acts of terrorism, natural disasters, and “routine” emergencies like house fires and medical emergencies.

Congress also faces an urgent need to reauthorize the USFA, the fire service’s primary representative in the federal government and the lead federal agency for fire data collection, public safety education, fire research, and fire service training. At a time when fire and EMS personnel are responding to increasing numbers of natural disasters like hurricanes, tornadoes, and wildfires; more medical emergency calls than ever before; the evolving challenge of responding on the front lines of a global pandemic; the continued scourge of structural fires, including home fires; increasing numbers of calls for hazardous materials response; and much more, it is essential that the agency tasked with supporting America’s fire and emergency services is properly resourced. The USFA’s reauthorization expired in September and would be restored by the Fire Grants and Safety Act. We urge Congress to reauthorize the USFA and

provide it with an authorization level that ensures the agency will be prepared to fulfill its mission and lead the fire service into the future.

On behalf of our nation's fire service, we urge Congress to include the Fire Grants and Safety Act (S.870/H.R.4090) as part of a FY24 appropriations package to reauthorize AFG, SAFER, and USFA.

Sincerely,

American Fire Sprinkler Association
Center for Campus Fire Safety
Center for Public Safety Excellence
Common Voices
Congressional Fire Services Institute
Cumberland Valley Volunteer Firemen's Association
Fire Apparatus Manufacturers' Association
Fire and Emergency Manufacturers & Services Association
Fire Department Safety Officers Association
Fire Equipment Manufacturers' Association – Government Relations Committee
Firehouse
Institution of Fire Engineers – United States of America Branch
International Association of Arson Investigators
International Association of Fire Chiefs
International Association of Fire Fighters
International Association of Wildland Fire
International Code Council
International Fire Buff Associates
International Fire Marshals Association
International Fire Service Training Association
International Society of Fire Service Instructors
Johnson Controls
Lexipol
National Association of State Fire Marshals
National Fallen Firefighters Foundation
National Fire Protection Association
National Fire Service Professional Qualifications Board
National Fire Sprinkler Association
National Volunteer Fire Council
North American Fire Training Directors
SFPE Foundation
Society of Fire Protection Engineers
USA Sprinkler Fitters
Women in Fire

CC: The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Susan Collins, Vice Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Kay Granger, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee