



PIKES PEAK FIRE CHIEFS COUNCIL

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To:
Governor Jared Polis
All Coloradans

The Pikes Peak Fire Chiefs Council is a coalition representing all 27 fire departments in El Paso County, Colorado. We represent and support 18 fire districts, 4 municipal fire departments, and 5 military fire departments. The Pikes Peak Fire Chiefs Council stands with the Colorado State Fire Chiefs Association and the Colorado Special Districts Association in opposing SB26-184.

VETO SB26-184

The Pikes Peak Fire Chiefs Council is unequivocally opposed to SB26-184 (Firefighter Cancer Benefits & Workers' Compensation). This bill will delay firefighters' access to cancer benefits by forcing our brave first responders to work through a cumbersome workers' compensation process. It can already take 4-8 weeks for firefighters to receive an MRI for a knee injury through the normal workers' compensation process; when it comes to cancer, days and weeks matter. Why ask firefighters who are facing cancer to wait longer for a decision on coverage and why let them worry about whether it will be approved? Fire district funding has already been severely impacted in the last several years through legislative decisions, and now you are going to move cancer coverage under **workers' compensation causing district workers' compensation premiums to skyrocket**, insurance costs to rise, and we are **asking firefighters to wait weeks or months for determinations; not less than two weeks as we see with trust coverage.**

The bill increases liability of public employers by expanding the range of covered conditions and increasing the burden of proof required for employers to rebut claims. In practice, this creates a near-automatic presumption of approval, incentivizing settlements to avoid costly legal disputes rather than ensuring efficient care delivery. Currently, 130 fire districts and departments pay into the Cancer Trust to ensure firefighters can access the benefits of the program. 9 of the 22 (trust eligible fire agencies) in El Paso County are proud members of the trust and do not want changes made. As part of participating in the program, a district or department has reduced costs for workers compensation. SB26-184 erodes the purpose of the Cancer Trust by reversing these savings and increasing workers' compensation exposure, effectively eliminating the financial benefit the Trust was designed to create. The bill eliminates the safeguards that prevent an injured firefighter from accessing the Cancer Trust and then accessing similar coverage through the workers' compensation system with no limitations. Districts in self-insurance pools or using commercial carriers will see higher premiums, reduced discounts, or stricter underwriting requirements due to expanded coverage with no stopgaps. Expanding eligibility creates a longer window for claims, making it more difficult for districts to predict and manage long-term liabilities. Rural and volunteer-based departments may face greater financial strain, potentially widening disparities in service capacity across the state. **The bill removes firefighters employed by the State of Colorado from this same coverage; why are we saying some firefighters are more important than others?**

CALL TO ACTION FOR COLORADANS: Oppose SB26-184. Urge Governor Polis to VETO this hastily drafted legislation that will destroy the firefighter cancer trust. **This will cost you more money.** As districts face increasing workers' compensation and insurance premiums they will undoubtedly have to come to you for **property tax increases**. Support your local firefighters and emergency medical professionals.

CALL TO ACTION FOR GOVERNOR POLIS: Keep your promise and do not support legislation that contradicts your stated desire to protect fire districts across Colorado. VETO SB26-184. PROTECT FIREFIGHTERS! Do NOT let the legislators destroy and dismantle the Cancer Trust. Treat ALL firefighters equally, not just those the legislators choose. **Signing this bill shows the firefighters YOU employ through the Division of Fire Prevention and Control that you do not care about them and agree with them being treated differently.**

In Service to Coloradans,

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