

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 15, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chris Murphy
Chair
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Katie Britt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Chair Murphy, and Ranking Member Britt:

As you begin crafting the fiscal year (FY) 2025 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations bill, we urge that you include increased funding for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Program. We appreciate the committee's previous strong support of these vital programs, but were concerned to see the cuts levied against these vital programs in Fiscal Year 2024, as they make important investments in public safety in states and local jurisdictions throughout the country.

The AFG Program has strengthened public safety by providing much needed funding for infrared cameras, personal protective gear, hazmat detection devices, improved breathing apparatuses, interoperable communications systems, and much more. This equipment is critical to ensuring the safety of firefighters as they respond to emergencies and protect our communities. The cost of this equipment, however, continues to increase year after year, and demand for the AFG Program continues to significantly outpace available funding.

Similarly, the SAFER Grant Program provides much-needed funding for career and volunteer fire departments to hire, recruit, and retain firefighters. This program is critical because more than half of all career and volunteer fire departments in our nation do not have sufficient personnel to protect the public effectively. In order to bring our nation's fire departments to the staffing levels needed to serve their communities and respond to emergencies, the SAFER Grant Program must be adequately funded.

The AFG and SAFER Programs are vital to firefighters across the country, and yet, the programs face a statutory sunset date of September 30, 2024. We urge Congress to pass the *Fire Grants and Safety Act* (S. 870) to reauthorize these essential programs. Should the *Fire Grants and Safety Act* not be enacted prior to your drafting of the Homeland Security appropriations bill,

we request that you include language to extend the sunset of AFG and SAFER for one year, until September 30, 2025.

We have an obligation to protect those who protect us by providing them with the necessary resources to perform their jobs as safely and effectively as possible. We urge you to help Congress meet that obligation by accounting for the increased needs of firefighters nationwide and providing increased funding for the AFG and SAFER programs in FY 2025. Thank you for your consideration of this request and your ongoing commitment to our nation's firefighters.

Sincerely,



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Tina Smith
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Tammy Baldwin
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Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator




Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



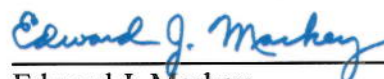
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United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Jon Tester
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Edward J. Markey
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