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Secretary, Ed Haber, Berlin FD, 860-828-3778

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Dear Senators,

I was made aware that there is a proposal being discussed to consolidate the Department of Emergency Management (DEMHS) under the Department of Public Safety. History should be our best teacher and we should all remember that prior to the creation of DEMHS we operated under a similar structure. I was involved in the Fire Service as well as emergency management during that time and I can personally say that the old way was not effective and could potentially affect the residents of Connecticut's safety.

In order to continue the critical work that DEMHS has begun, it must remain an independent agency. DEMHS staff and leadership are aware of and responsive to the needs of local communities.

The Connecticut Fire Chiefs and its more than 700 fire service professionals STRONGLY oppose the consolidation of DEHMS with any other state agency. In the world that we live in it is imminent that we will suffer another terrorist attack on our soil, and emergency responders must be able to respond, communicate and interoperate with all agencies, DEMHS has created a structure and an environment that we can now do that.

The residents of Connecticut and the emergency responders in Connecticut are much better trained and prepared to respond today than they were 5 years ago, thanks to DEMHS staff. While we understand the economic culture we are in, we believe that the proposed changes would not outweigh the fiscal impact and potentially be harmful to emergency responders and ultimately the residents of Connecticut.

Respectfully,

Jack Casner

President

Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association