

2008 -- H 7171

LC00340

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2008

A N A C T

RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- FIREFIGHTER CANCER WELLNESS

Introduced By: Representatives Picard, Long, Loughlin, and Slater

Date Introduced: January 22, 2008

Referred To: House Health, Education & Welfare

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 23 of the General Laws entitled "Health and Safety" is hereby
2 amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 12.8

4 THE FIREFIGHTER CANCER WELLNESS ACT

5 **23-12.8-1. Short title.** – This chapter shall be known and may be cited as "The
6 Firefighter Cancer Wellness Act."

7 **23-12.8-2. Legislative findings.** – It is found and declared as follows:

8 (1) According to 2001-2002 statistics from the National Cancer Institute, Rhode Island
9 has the nation's highest incidence rate of bladder cancer found in any state, with twenty-eight and
10 eight-tenths (28.8) cases per one hundred thousand (100,000) residents as compared with a
11 nationwide annual incidence rate of twenty and nine-tenths (20.9) per one hundred thousand
12 (100,000) residents.

13 (2) Studies have shown that incidents of bladder cancer among firefighters occur at a
14 significantly higher rate than that of the general population due to their exposure to toxic
15 chemicals.

16 (3) Bladder cancer is one of the most deadly cancers, if not detected. If diagnosed in its
17 early stages, bladder cancer has a five (5) year survival rate over ninety percent (90%). If
18 diagnosed at an advanced stage, the five (5) year survival rate is less than ten percent (10%).

19 (4) Previously, bladder cancer screening required expensive and invasive testing.

1 Modern technology now allows for simple, inexpensive and noninvasive screening. It now costs
2 far more to treat one victim of advanced stage bladder cancer than to screen thousands of
3 firefighters.

4 (5) The state of Rhode Island must take action to promote firefighter wellness and to
5 ensure the health and safety of its firefighters from a disease which can be treated, if detected
6 early.

7 **23-12.8-3. Program established.** – (a) The director of the department of health shall
8 establish, promote and maintain a public information program regarding the incidence of bladder
9 cancer in professional and volunteer firefighters in Rhode Island in order to encourage such
10 persons to seek medical care for the prevention or treatment of any malignant conditions resulting
11 from occupational exposure to hazardous materials. Firefighter participation in this wellness
12 program shall be voluntary.

13 (b) This wellness program shall be conducted throughout the state and shall include, but
14 not be limited to:

15 (1) Preemployment testing, annual testing and other follow-up testing as may be
16 recommended by the department;

17 (2) Data collection of all incidences of bladder cancer in firefighters and related
18 professions in Rhode Island; and

19 (3) A program of education for such groups.

20 (c) The wellness program shall emphasize the need for annual testing and the need to
21 remain informed about additional developments concerning links between firefighters'
22 occupational exposure to hazardous materials and bladder cancer.

23 (d) The director shall designate and may enter into contracts with providers of health care
24 and/or bladder cancer testing materials for the purpose of establishing screening programs for
25 firefighters and related professions. In selecting provider(s), the director shall consider such
26 provider's compliance with state and federal standards, the provider's location in relation to
27 geographical distribution of firefighters, and the capacity of such provider to properly screen for
28 bladder cancer using the most accurate and economically efficient means available.

29 (e) The department shall, on or before January 31st of each year, submit a report to the
30 general assembly of its findings and recommendations concerning the effectiveness, impact and
31 benefits derived from the program.

32 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

=====
LC00340
=====

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- FIREFIGHTER CANCER WELLNESS

- 1 This act would create a program directed by the department of health to test for, collect
- 2 data on, and to educate firefighters in awareness of bladder cancer.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

=====
LC00340
=====