



# DENVER FIRE FIGHTERS LOCAL 858

12 Lakeside Lane #400 · Denver, CO 80212



August 22, 2022

All City Council Members  
City of Denver Council  
Denver City and County Building  
1437 Bannock St, Room 451  
Denver, CO 80202

**Re: City and County of Denver Participation in the Voluntary Cancer Award Program (VCAP)**

Dear City Council Member,

Denver Fire Fighters Local 858 has been working in cooperation with the Mayor's Office, City Council, the City of Denver Risk Manager, and Fire Department leadership to educate and collaborate to find solutions to address occupational cancer with our fire fighters. The number of Denver Fire Fighters who have had to fight for their life are staggering. I wish I could say that all these fights were won, however, we are adding fire fighters to the IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial in Colorado Springs on a regular basis. Some of the names you may know are James Kittleson, Ted Maddock, Carl Johnson, Carlos Lopez, Tony Helfer, David Novotny and Richard Pula. All served a career of honor responding to the needs of the Citizens of Denver only to have their lives cut short because of this horrible occupational disease.

In 2007 the Colorado Legislature passed House Bill 07-1008 which provided presumptive cancer protection for fire fighters if they meet certain thresholds and the cancers covered were brain, digestive system, hematological system, genitourinary system, and skin. These claims were processed through the worker's compensation system that involves layers of legal effort to determine whether the claim is work related or not. This left fire fighters with two fights, fight for their life while fighting to maintain their income and health benefits.

In 2017, the Colorado Legislature passed an amendment to the 2007 legislation creating the statewide Voluntary Cancer Award Program (VCAP). This was a labor-management collaboration that led to a groundbreaking system that allows Cities and Special Districts to pay a premium to a statewide program that can eliminate the necessity of filing a worker's compensation claim without stripping a fire fighter of that right to do so. The plan has proven successful, and it is allowing an alternative mechanism to help fire fighters throughout their fight with occupational cancer.

Because Local 858 believes in building relationships with City leadership, I am happy to say that hard work, collaboration and dedication has led to Risk Management and the City Attorney's Office recommending that the City of Denver join the statewide VCAP. This will result in a mutual benefit to the fire fighters, as well as the City of Denver. Currently the City of Denver is spending approximately \$1.5 million per year for occupational cancer claims and the premium to participate in the VCAP will be \$338 per eligible fire fighter (over 5 years of firefighting). Fire fighters will not have to navigate the difficult worker's compensation system while they are fighting for their lives. In addition, the VCAP will bring coverage to two more cancers: breast and thyroid. We have had two female fire fighters contract breast cancer within the last 5 years and their cancers were not eligible in the worker's compensation system.

Thank you for your time and support of this important shift to help the dedicated fire fighters of Denver. Please let me know if you have any questions and I will more than happy to meet with you. The language for Denver to participate in the VCAP will be presented at a future Finance & Governance Committee.

Respectfully Submitted,

David Foster, President – Denver Fire Fighters, IAFF Local 858  
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