

**TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF
THE PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF FIRE EQUIPMENT
DISTRIBUTORS**



**BEFORE THE
SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
COMMITTEE**

SEPTEMBER 11, 2017

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

1321 SCALP AVENUE, JOHNSTOWN PENNSYLVANIA

7:00 P.M.

Good evening Chairman Vulakovich, Chairman Costa, Senators and staff of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and Emergency Preparedness Committee and esteemed guests. My name is Bill Bowman and I am with Keystone Fire Company. Sitting next to me is Todd VanWagner who is with Gorge A. Kint Incorporated. Both of our companies are members of the Pennsylvania Association of Fire Equipment Distributors (PaFED) and we appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts, policy goals and industry expertise that we believe will further improve the delivery of emergency response in the Commonwealth as mandated by the adoption of SR 6.

PaFED, founded in 1988, is comprised of fire equipment distributors and service providers, as well as the industry's manufacturers and suppliers, gathered together through various regional, statewide and committee meetings to discuss common concerns, to share ideas, and to address key issues in the primary fire equipment industry technologies:

- Portable Fire Extinguishers
- Fire Alarm Systems
- Kitchen Fire Suppression Systems
- Fire Sprinkler Systems
- Special Hazard Fire Suppression Systems

Arguably, the members of PaFED provide the first line of emergency response to ensure Commonwealth schools, governments, businesses and private residences are equipped with state and locally mandated fire suppression systems that protect against personal and property losses. The mission of PaFED is to continuously work towards improving the economic environment, business performance, and technical competence of companies operating in the fire equipment industry in Pennsylvania, by:

- Interacting with authorities that have compliance and enforcement jurisdiction over the fire equipment industry and other governmental officials to secure the adoption of uniform standards and ordinances governing the installation,

monitoring, maintenance and repair of mandated fire equipment, including the uniform interpretation thereof.

- Researching industry trends and statistics that lead to the adoption trade policies and practices that will stabilize the fire equipment industry and protect the public interest.
- Gather and disseminate information to its membership, state and local elected officials and other regulatory bodies that improve fire protection throughout the Commonwealth and likewise increase the competence of the fire equipment industry through education and mandated training.
- Furthering the joint interest of and to build good will between distributors, dealers and manufacturers of the fire equipment industry.
- Cooperating and working with insurance companies and government officials with jurisdiction over matters affecting the fire equipment industry, manufacturers of fire equipment and all other trade associations or individuals who may be of assistance in furthering the general purposes of the corporation.

It is also important to note that while PAFED primarily focuses its efforts on addressing industry related issues pertinent to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the association is actively involved in, and coordinates its efforts with, the National Association of Fire Equipment Distributors (NAFED), the Fire Equipment Manufacturers Association (FEMA), the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and Underwriters Laboratories (UL), as well as many other national, regional and related organizations, as applicable to the situation or issue.

We are here this evening not only to provide you with the background of our association but also to share PaFED's local and state advocacy goals during the 2017-18 legislative session, which include: 1) Pursuing state standardization, including licensure or certification, of fire equipment companies and personnel; 2) implementing uniform permitting and plan review requirements at the municipal level; and 3) Increasing enforcement of local fire codes.

First, the members of PaFED strongly support the enactment of legislation that will establish a statewide certification and/or licensing of the fire protection industry to establish a minimum level of excellence, professionalism, and standardization for all fire protection installation and service companies to follow. This will ensure that a consistent baseline competency is offered to the marketplace for the proper installation and service of portable fire extinguishers, fire suppression systems, and building fire alarm systems. PaFED is prepared to work with the Committee to draft legislation modeled after other states that not only ensures a minimum level of competency of the industry providers, but also acts as a revenue generating mechanism for the Commonwealth to address other related needs which we will elaborate on more below.

Second, the members of PaFED strongly supports the enactment of legislation that provides for the uniform administration of permitting and plan review requirements at the municipal level. As you know, each municipality differs in their administration of contractor licensing and plan review requirements & procedures. Most installation and service companies do not operate within a single municipality, and therefore must navigate the various nuances in quality standards, process and associated expenses of each municipality. This results in the inefficient and inconsistent delivery of service in the marketplace. Again, PaFED is prepared to work with the Committee to draft a legislative proposal that is modeled and proven effective by other states and establishes clear and consistent means of administration of the fire protection service industry.

Finally, PaFED strongly supports increased enforcement of local fire codes. Just as each municipality differs in their administration of contractor licensing and plan review requirements & procedures, each municipality likewise differs in their inspection and acceptance testing procedures, as well as the means in which minimum codes and standards are enforced. Some municipalities work to actively enforce the proper installation and maintenance of fire protection systems and equipment, while many others simply do not or only focus on specific items or subparts of these systems and equipment. The lack of general awareness, training, and resources seem to be the biggest culprits preventing the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) from giving the fire protection industry, as well as the local community, maximum assurance that life safety systems and equipment are being properly installed, inspected, tested and maintained as necessary (and proven effective) to prevent loss of life and property. PaFED is prepared to work with the Committee to draft and enact legislation that will provide Commonwealth municipalities with the necessary direction, guidance and training needed to ensure the AHJ community is able to operate with the most accurate and up-to-date information available.

Again, thank you for allowing PaFED to testify before you this evening with regards to the top three issues currently inhibiting our core mission of protecting life and property. We appreciate your time and attention and welcome the opportunity to answer any questions the members of the Committee or staff may have now.