February 9, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson  The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Speaker of the House of Representatives Senate Majority Leader
Washington, DC 20515 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Senate Minority Leader House Minority Leader
Washington, DC 20510 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, and Leader Jeffries,

As Congress considers the upcoming fiscal year (FY) 2024 legislation, our organizations urge you to include provisions to reauthorize key fire service grant programs—the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) and the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) programs—as well as the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA). We are pleased that the reauthorization of AFG, SAFER, and USFA has strong, bipartisan support in both chambers. It is imperative that the Fire Grants and Safety Act (S. 870/H.R. 4090) be included in the FY24 appropriations package to ensure it becomes law before AFG and SAFER expire.

All across the country, local fire departments of all types and sizes do not have enough staff, training, personal protective clothing, breathing apparatus, and other equipment. AFG and SAFER help ensure fire and emergency services personnel in the U.S. are properly trained, staffed, and equipped to protect their communities. These programs improve response capabilities across all emergency response areas—from fires to medical aid and hazardous materials response. AFG and SAFER are a lifeline to departments of all types—career, combination, and volunteer. Sadly, the authorization for these programs lapsed at the end of FY2023, and they now face a statutory sunset on September 30, 2024. As our nation’s fire and emergency service continues to face an ever-growing number of calls for service and all-hazards responses, Congress cannot allow the two largest forms of federal support to disappear. Without these programs, our communities will be ill-prepared to respond to acts of terrorism, natural disasters, and “routine” emergencies like house fires and medical emergencies.

Congress also faces an urgent need to reauthorize the USFA, the fire service’s primary representative in the federal government and the lead federal agency for fire data collection, public safety education, fire research, and fire service training. At a time when fire and EMS personnel are responding to increasing numbers of natural disasters like hurricanes, tornadoes, and wildfires; more medical emergency calls than ever before; the evolving challenge of responding on the front lines of a global pandemic; the continued scourge of structural fires, including home fires; increasing numbers of calls for hazardous materials response; and much more, it is essential that the agency tasked with supporting America’s fire and emergency services is properly resourced. The USFA’s reauthorization expired in September and would be restored by the Fire Grants and Safety Act. We urge Congress to reauthorize the USFA and
provide it with an authorization level that ensures the agency will be prepared to fulfill its mission and lead the fire service into the future.

On behalf of our nation’s fire service, we urge Congress to include the Fire Grants and Safety Act (S.870/H.R.4090) as part of a FY24 appropriations package to reauthorize AFG, SAFER, and USFA.

Sincerely,

American Fire Sprinkler Association  
Center for Campus Fire Safety  
Center for Public Safety Excellence  
Common Voices  
Congressional Fire Services Institute  
Cumberland Valley Volunteer Firemen’s Association  
Fire Apparatus Manufacturers’ Association  
Fire and Emergency Manufacturers & Services Association  
Fire Department Safety Officers Association  
Fire Equipment Manufacturers’ Association – Government Relations Committee  
Firehouse  
Institution of Fire Engineers – United States of America Branch  
International Association of Arson Investigators  
International Association of Fire Chiefs  
International Association of Fire Fighters  
International Association of Wildland Fire  
International Code Council  
International Fire Buff Associates  
International Fire Marshals Association  
International Fire Service Training Association  
International Society of Fire Service Instructors  
Johnson Controls  
Lexipol  
National Association of State Fire Marshals  
National Fallen Firefighters Foundation  
National Fire Protection Association  
National Fire Service Professional Qualifications Board  
National Fire Sprinkler Association  
National Volunteer Fire Council  
North American Fire Training Directors  
SFPE Foundation  
Society of Fire Protection Engineers  
USA Sprinkler Fitters  
Women in Fire

CC: The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Susan Collins, Vice Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Kay Granger, Chair, House Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee