



September 20, 2022

The Honorable Alex Padilla
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Padilla:

I am writing to respectfully request that you consider supporting and co-sponsoring the Fire Station Improvement Act, S. 4517 and the Fire Station Construction Grants Act, S.4690, which align with the City's 2022 public safety federal platform priority.

As you know from your visit to Santa Rosa in 2021, our City has come a long way since the devastating 2017 wildfires. However, we continue to experience the impact of climate change through additional wildfires and extreme drought, especially those residents and businesses within the Wildland Urban Interface.

Santa Rosa has prepared an After-Action Report, a Community Wildfire Protection Plan and conducted a strategic Standards of Coverage and Deployment Plan, which identified the need to improve the City's fire response capabilities by building new fire stations and relocating fire stations to key areas of the City to meet changing climate and community needs. For instance, the City is committed to building a new fire station, Fire Station 8, that will serve the Roseland neighborhood, which was annexed by the City in 2017. The City has secured \$5 million in state and local funding for the station but is still in need of \$15 million to build the station in one of the most underserved areas of Santa Rosa.

S. 4517, the Fire Station Improvement Act of 2022, will give greater flexibility to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Assistance to Firefighting Grants program. This bill, if enacted, would broaden the availability of grants under this program to improve fire stations and protect firefighters and staff. Given the limited scope of AFG grants, the City in recent memory has not applied. Our experience mirrors statewide data with AFG grants, from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022, only 60 agencies in California received AFG grant funding. This is in line with FEMA's own announcement recently surrounding the lack of applications for AFG grants.

S. 4690, the Fire Station Construction Grants Act, would authorize \$1 billion for a new FEMA grant program to help communities build new fire stations and rebuilding, or renovating fire and EMS department facilities. In addition, funding could be used to upgrading existing facilities

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to install exhaust emission control systems, install backup power systems, upgrade, or replace environmental control systems (such as HVAC systems), remove, or remediate mold, and construct or modify living quarters for use by male and female personnel.

According to the International Association of Fire Chiefs, a recent national survey conducted by the National Fire Protection Association found that 43 percent of surveyed fire departments are over 40 years old and are in crucial need of repair. Furthermore, 59 percent of U.S. fire stations lack exhaust emission control, and are not properly equipped with cancer-preventing systems. In addition, the report finds that many fire and EMS stations across the country have no backup power, have outdated ventilation systems and mold, or even lack crew quarters for female personnel.

These bills would create designated federal funding programs that will provide our first responders, who put their lives on the line every day, with modern and safe stations that will help them carry out their mission and enhance community safety.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to shape federal policy that will bolster our resiliency and safety needs.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Rogers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chris" and last name "Rogers" clearly distinguishable.

Chris Rogers, Mayor