CALIFORNIA PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS

March 8, 2020

The Honorable Adam Gray, Chair
Assembly Governmental Organization Committee
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1945 (Salas) – Emergency services: first responders. **(OPPOSE)**

Dear Assembly Member Gray,

The California Professional Firefighters (CPF), state council of the International Association of Fire Fighters, representing over 30,000 career firefighting and emergency medical service personnel statewide, regrets to inform you that we must oppose AB 1945, which has been referred to the Assembly Governmental Organization Committee for consideration. ***We respectfully request your "NO" vote on this bill when it comes before you.***

AB 1945 seeks to define the term "first responder" in statute, to include well-respected and dedicated professionals such as "a public safety dispatcher or public safety telecommunicator," "an emergency response communication employee," and "an emergency manager." Such professionals play critical roles in the overall emergency response system, but do not risk their lives every day in unpredictable circumstances that present an immediate danger to life and health (IDLH).

The term "first responder" is used in Chapter 3.5 of the Health and Safety Code in the Communicable Diseases Exposure Notification Act, where Legislative intent language is clear and specific that a first responder includes "police, firefighters, rescue personnel, and other persons who provide the first response to emergencies..." It is unclear what the proposed expansion of the definition contained in AB 1945 achieves, other than introducing confusion and conflating the distinct and certainly important roles of all the participants in the emergency response system from the men and women on the front lines, such as firefighters and police officers and our critical partners in coordinating and ensuring our timely response, such as sworn public safety dispatchers and emergency managers.

While dispatchers, communication workers and emergency managers are important pieces of the public safety infrastructure and should be provided the appropriate benefits and protections commensurate with their roles, they fundamentally do not fulfill the same duties as firefighters or other public safety officers.

Public safety officers such as firefighters and police rely on the professionalism of dispatchers and they are a critical part of the system, but it is important to draw a line between those who risk their lives daily for the public good and those who provide them with support. **For these reasons, we urge you to reject AB 1945.**

Sincerely,



Christy Bouma
Governmental Advocate
CB:bt

c: Members, Assembly Governmental Organization Committee
Assembly Member Salas