

April 5, 2024

Peter Burke
President
Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts
P.O. Box 1036
Westford, MA 01886

Dear President Burke:

I am writing to encourage you and your members to consider applying for a new round of federal grant funding for fire departments in Massachusetts.

I know that Massachusetts fire departments face funding challenges that can make it difficult for some to train and recruit new firefighters and maintain staffing levels that meet community needs. To address these needs, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently announced that applications are now open for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant program, with approximately \$360 million in funding available for communities across the country.¹ The SAFER grant program provides funding directly to fire departments to help you hire new firefighters, retain current firefighters, provide training and education for firefighters, and purchase equipment and supplies.²

FEMA's Notice of Funding Opportunity for this round of SAFER grants is currently accepting applications from fire departments nationwide, with an application deadline of 5:00 pm on Friday, April 12, 2024. Career, volunteer, and combination fire departments with a "formally recognized arrangement with a state, local, tribal, or territorial authority ... to provide fire suppression" services are eligible to apply for a SAFER grant, and I highly encourage you to submit an application for this funding opportunity.³ FEMA will prioritize applications from fire departments who seek to improve compliance with National Fire Protection Agency standards.⁴

¹ Federal Emergency Management Agency, "FEMA Invites Fire Department and Volunteer Firefighter Interest Organizations to Apply for \$360 Million in FEMA Grants to Boost Number of Trained Firefighters in Communities Nationwide," press release, March 11, 2024, <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20240311/fema-invites-fire-department-and-volunteer-firefighter-interest>.

² Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Staffing For Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER)," <https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/firefighters/safer>.

³ Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): Fiscal Year 2023 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Program," p. 8, https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_fy23-safer-nofo.pdf.

⁴ *Id.*, p. 57.

Since I was elected to the Senate, I have fought to secure federal funding for Massachusetts firefighters. Over the last decade, Massachusetts fire departments have received over \$270 million in SAFER and Assistance to Firefighters Grant funds.⁵ Federal SAFER grants have been essential to shoring up funding shortfalls that dedicated Massachusetts fire departments have needed to ensure sufficient staffing and provide adequate training. For example, Belchertown received a nearly \$1.5 million SAFER grant in 2022⁶ that enabled the town to hire six new firefighters and paramedics.⁷ And the Worcester Fire Department received nearly \$23 million in SAFER grants in 2022 and 2023, enabling the department to hire 90 firefighters to address the city’s fire suppression needs.⁸

I will continue to advocate for a longer-term, sustained stream of federal funding for the SAFER grant program. Federal SAFER grants are a key resource to ensure that firefighters—and the cities and towns you serve—are appropriately protected from fire-related dangers. I highly encourage you to make the most of the opportunity provided through FEMA’s new round of SAFER grants, and look forward to working with you to bring this funding home to your community.

Should you or your members require assistance from my office in applying for a SAFER grant, please contact Nikhil Srinivasan from my staff at: nikhil_srinivasan@warren.senate.gov.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

⁵ Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, “The Economic Impact of Federal Investments in Massachusetts,” February 2024, p. 21, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Report%20on%20the%20Economic%20Impact%20of%20Federal%20Investments%20in%20MA.pdf>.

⁶ The Reminder, “Grant will expand Belchertown Fire Department staffing,” Chris Maza, October 12, 2022, <https://www.there minder.com/localnews/belchertown/grant-will-expand-belchertown-fire-department-staf/>.

⁷ Western Mass News, “Town by Town: Belchertown first responders swearing-in ceremony, Girls Inc. receive funding, and state tax forms in local library,” Abigail Murillo Villacorta, February 3, 2023, <https://www.westernmassnews.com/2023/02/04/town-by-town-belchertown-first-responders-swearing-in-ceremony-girls-inc-receive-funding-state-tax-forms-local-library/>.

⁸ The City of Worcester, “FEMA GRANTS NEARLY \$15 MILLION TO THE WORCESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT,” press release, September 26, 2022, <https://www.worcesterma.gov/announcements/fema-grants-nearly-15-million-to-the-worcester-fire-department>; The City of Worcester, “WORCESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT RECEIVES \$8.6M SAFER GRANT TO HIRE 30 FIREFIGHTERS,” press release, September 28, 2023, <https://www.worcesterma.gov/announcements/worcester-fire-department-receives-8.6m-safer-grant-to-hire-30-firefighters>; The City of Worcester, “WORCESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT RECEIVES \$8.6M SAFER GRANT TO HIRE 30 FIREFIGHTERS,” press release, September 28, 2023, <https://www.worcesterma.gov/announcements/worcester-fire-department-receives-8.6m-safer-grant-to-hire-30-firefighters>.

