



## House Bill 5046

### AN ACT SUPPORTING FIREFIGHTER AND POLICE OFFICER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

#### Testimony of the Department of Administrative Services

#### Public Safety and Security Committee

March 3, 2026

Senator Gaston, Representative Boyd, Senator Cicarella, Representative Howard, and distinguished Public Safety and Security Committee members. I am Michelle Gilman, Commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), and I am joined today by State Fire Marshal Lauri Volkert. We thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Governor's proposal, **House Bill 5046: An Act Supporting Firefighter and Police Officer Recruitment and Retention**.

**House Bill 5046** aims to help with the recruitment and retention of firefighters by creating meaningful incentives, including tuition waivers for undergraduate and graduate programs at CT State Community College, the Connecticut State University System, and the University of Connecticut, as well as a mortgage assistance program administered by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority.

The fire service is an incredibly diverse profession, and by strengthening firefighter recruitment and retention, we strengthen the entire fire service ecosystem, not just the entry point.

For example, some firefighters go on to become fire inspectors, professionals who enforce fire and life-safety codes, conduct inspections of buildings and fire protection systems, and work with property owners to correct hazards before a tragedy strikes. Others may serve as fire marshals, investigating fires, determining origin and cause, and ensuring accountability and code compliance across our communities.

All of these pathways are facing challenges in recruitment and retention, and **House Bill 5046** will help continue building a fire service workforce that not only responds to emergencies but also works every day to prevent them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and we urge passage of **House Bill 5046**.