



MATTHEW RITTER
HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

September 3, 2019

The Honorable Ned Lamont
Office of the Governor
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Governor Lamont:

I am writing to respectfully request the approval of funding by the State Bond Commission for the Valley Fire Chiefs Regional Training School. This project is a necessary and important investment for public safety in this region. As you know, our volunteer firefighters respond to calls without hesitation at all hours to protect those experiencing danger, distress and tragedy. Fire training is time consuming, academically and physically rigorous, and expensive for volunteers who also hold full time jobs and have families. The State Firefighters' Association listed the Valley Fire School's construction and the PTSD bill as their top two priorities for the 2019 legislative session. With PTSD passed, it is now time to turn our full attention to ensuring proper emergency response training and public safety for southwestern Connecticut.

To give you a bit of background, the Valley Fire School lost its location 20 years ago when it was discovered to be environmentally unsafe and toxic. Despite this, the Valley Fire School continues to operate (with much logistical difficulty) in a nomadic fashion--training volunteer and career firefighters, law enforcement personnel, fire police, EMS personnel, boards of education and various youth programs, including, but not limited to, the Boy Scouts, and babysitting programs. Volunteer fire service in the Valley is not only deeply engrained in the region's culture (as many citizens and families support the service), but it is also a critical and free workforce that these municipalities cannot otherwise afford. Having a fire school to maintain, train and draw new volunteers is vital to keeping this essential service going for the region.

To date, the State has already invested over \$2 million for the purchase of land for the Valley Fire School, geologic and soil testing, and architectural renderings. Recently, the Valley Fire School completed its bid process for the second time and DAS confirmed that the project can have shovels in the ground come spring if half of the required funding is approved by the State Bonding Commission this fall.

It is crucial that the Valley Fire School be bonded and we ensure that the volunteer fire services of this region have the facilities needed to keep strong and well-trained fire departments in place to continue services for these communities. Please do not hesitate to be in touch if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Matthew Ritter