Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and committee members.

My name is Mark Docherty; I am the President of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union and a Sergeant with the Sterling Heights Fire Department.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf my organization and the over 5000 firefighters it represents. Our firefighters are serving on the front lines protecting 130 different communities throughout the state of Michigan.

I come before you today to express our opposition to HB 4760-4765.

These bills will prohibit the ability of a community to establish minimum staffing requirements for fire and police depts. in a municipal charter.

Minimum staffing requirements are utilized to ensure a certain level of safety for the fire fighters and police officers and the residents they serve.

Calls for emergency service do not change as manpower is reduced, although what does change is the risk we take to do our job. The risk we assume dramatically increases as manpower decreases.

These bills also amend the Home Rule Act, taking away local control and the will of the people. If residents of a city choose to establish a standard as to what type and level of service they want to maintain then that should be honored.

The City of Dearborn is an example of a city that did establish staffing standards for their police and fire departments. They have one of the best police and fire departments in the State of Michigan.

If there becomes funding issues that make it difficult to maintain that level of service, then it should go back to the people to decide whether they want to pay more to maintain the service or decrease the staffing levels. Again it's their City and should by their choice.

Bills like these go against everything that the Home Rule Act stands for.

Currently in this economy it is highly unlikely that any community would pass any minimum staffing standard, although again, if they so choose to than that should be up to them and not blocked by Lansing.

The residents are the ones that will be depending on the service and will be paying for that service. And our fire fighters will be the ones that have to work in whatever system is adopted by the residents. The residents that we are sworn to protect.

We urge you to allow this to remain a local issue and not erode the democratic process.

I want to thank the Chairman and the committee members for this opportunity to address the committee today.

And I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.