



# INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS®

HAROLD A. SCHAITBERGER  
General President

EDWARD A. KELLY  
General Secretary-Treasurer

July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Dear Representative,

The International Association of Fire Fighters represents more than 316,000 professional fire fighters and emergency medical personnel, working in every state in the nation. We strongly support the bipartisan Middle-Class Health Benefits Tax Repeal Act of 2019 (HR 748) and request that you vote **YES**, this Wednesday when it is considered under suspension of the rules.

Voting yes on HR 748 would repeal the 40 percent tax on employer-provided health insurance and protect the healthcare that so many public safety workers have fought to get and protect.

This ill-conceived tax was originally sold to lower and slow the rate of healthcare costs. What the tax actually does is shift more costs onto consumers through higher deductibles, copays and coinsurance. Taxing health plans with high premiums will do nothing to drive down costs because the real drivers of those costs are age, gender and geography. As a result, this tax will punish fire fighters based on who they work with or where they live, and that is both bad policy and unfair to workers.

Proponents of the tax argued it would only target the richest Americans, but that too turned out to be untrue. Most plans that would fall victim to this tax cover working class, middle-income Americans. Fire fighters in particular, fall into this category. The dangerous nature and high risks associated with working in the fire service make fire fighters' health plans critically important; workers will often choose to protect their health care over increased pay.

Taxing health benefits will undermine an integral component of our health care system. One of the primary reasons why most Americans receive health care coverage through their employer is owed to the fact that their benefits are not taxed. At the risk of weakening health benefits, depressing wages and burdening workers with higher taxes, we should not support policies that tax health care for American workers.

While the tax does not go into effect until 2022, the IAFF seeks its immediate repeal. Many of our members negotiate multi-year contracts that are directly impacted by the eventual implementation of this tax. The time for incremental relief is over. Congress must pass HR 748 and fully repeal the excise tax on employer-provided health insurance.

When the House votes tomorrow on this measure, I ask that you stand with all public safety workers and vote YES. Thank you for your considered support on this important issue.

Respectfully,

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Harold A. Schaitberger  
General President