



ILLINOIS FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

Dedicated to excellence in the Fire Service

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In the January legislative session, the Illinois General Assembly passed wide ranging legislation under the headline of police reform. House Bill 3653 is certain to have an impact on policing in the State of Illinois. As an organization representing Fire Chiefs, we value our relationship with our law enforcement counterparts and empathize with their concerns with these changes. Not being members of the law enforcement community, it is difficult for us to understand the true impact this legislation will have, either positively or negatively, on the ability of the police officers in Illinois to protect our communities. **As such, the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association is not taking a stance on House Bill 3653.**

One section of the legislation does have the potential to directly and significantly impact the fire service. In 2018, the General Assembly, by a nearly unanimous vote, created the ability for law enforcement agencies to establish community deflection programs, in conjunction with community groups and trained specialists, to attempt to address substance abuse and behavioral health incidents. These programs could include both pre and post incident intervention, as well as initiation by an individual, community responder or law enforcement officer.

In 2020, legislation was introduced that would essentially prevent law enforcement from responding to incidents based on behavioral or substance abuse. This legislation would have placed an overwhelming burden on the EMS system and our responders. The IFCA argued that it would severely impact the safety of everyone involved and ultimately not provide the best care for these patients. The current legislation does not take the same viewpoint, rather looks at this response as a collaborative effort.

The ability for EMS and fire responders to be involved in a deflection program, if they feel it is appropriate for their community, is a positive step for everyone. The hope is that a successful program will reduce the number of EMS incidents, particularly repeat patients. In the right situation, a deflection program may be a substantial part of a Community Risk Reduction (CRR) plan and even an aspect of a mobile integrated program. Allowing fire and EMS organizations to voluntarily participate in a coordinated community effort is an important step to help keep our communities safe. Based on this, the IFCA is in agreement with this portion of the House Bill.

We continue to monitor legislative activity in Springfield and continue to look for opportunities to help our members keep their communities safe.