

May 12, 2024

Dear Director Cutting,

I am reaching out to you and your office regarding the requirements for out-of-state firefighters to obtain full-time career firefighting positions in New Hampshire. I contacted the New Hampshire Fire Academy earlier this year after it was brought to my attention that as a Vermont firefighter, I may not be able to lateral transfer to a New Hampshire fire department after my Candidate Physical Ability Test certificate has expired. The employee I spoke to at the New Hampshire Fire Academy confirmed that I would not be able to lateral transfer from out of state, and I would have to retake the CPAT, if my certificate was expired. While this is problematic for me in terms of planning my career in the fire service, I believe this could negatively impact the recruitment efforts of New Hampshire fire departments, if it has not already.

I understand the purpose of the CPAT exam as a requirement for a full-time career firefighter position in New Hampshire and in other states, including Vermont. It is an important piece in determining a candidate's physical and mental qualifications. I also understand some departments in the state require employees, regardless if they are just beginning their fire service careers, or in the middle of them, to have valid CPAT certificates. However, New Hampshire fire departments have the option to not require candidates transferring from other full-time departments in the state to have valid CPAT certificates. Chapter 700 of the state Administrative Rules pertaining to the Division of Fire Standards and Training and Emergency Medical Services provides the framework for hiring firefighters. It defines transfers as "any full-time career fire personnel, as defined by Fire 101.17, and employed by a New Hampshire fire department, as defined in Fire 101.15." The definition further states that the candidate should have "previously completed the requirements of Fire 702.01, or the physical ability test in effect at the time of original appointment."

The administrative rules give full-time fire departments the option to hire firefighters who work for other career departments in the state regardless of the status of their CPAT certificates. These rules do not give fire departments the same option when hiring firefighters who work in other states and have CPAT certificates. If their CPAT certificates are expired, these out-of-state candidates must retake the test. This creates an extra hiring requirement for candidates who have already proven, like their New Hampshire counterparts, that they are capable of doing the job, they just have been doing it in another state. A consequence of this situation is further limiting an already limited candidate pool. It also creates a predicament for firefighters, such as myself, who are New Hampshire residents with New Hampshire issued CPAT certificates working for full-time career fire departments in Vermont, which also requires CPAT. After that certificate is expired, these firefighters do not have the option to return to employment in New Hampshire without retaking the CPAT.

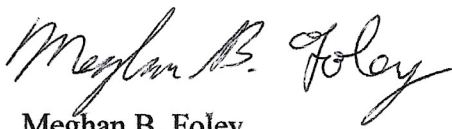
I passed the CPAT in June 2023 at the Merrill Fay Arena in Laconia. It was my fifth time in three years taking the test. I was 37 years old. I was also one of 10 women to pass the state test that year. I was hired by the Brattleboro Fire Department soon after, and I began working for that agency as a firefighter and EMT in August 2023. I took the position with Brattleboro, as it was the first one offered to me, and already had a female firefighter on its roster. It was also within 30 minutes from my residence, and did not require I relocate. It further allowed me to keep my

affiliation with the Swanzev Fire Department, which like most on-call and volunteer fire departments in the state, is struggling with declining membership and increasing call volume. It is only a matter of time before these fire departments start hiring full-time employees, or in some cases look to regionalize. This will further strain existing full-time career fire departments and the in-state candidate pool.

I do not expect the state to change its requirements based on my situation, However, I believe that at this time in the history of the fire service, limiting the definition of lateral transfer to in-state candidates only is more harmful than helpful to the recruitment process. For this reason, I hope you and your office will look further into this matter.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any further questions, I can be reached at the contact information below.

Sincerely,



Meghan B. Foley

