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J. Jeffrey Varone
Fire Chief

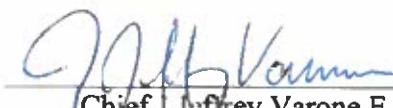Committee Members,   26 January 2026

I write this letter of support for HB 2026-H 7135. Vehicle battery technology has developed over decades. Lithium Ion battery technology began in the 1970s, was refined during the 1980s and put into commercial production in the 1990s. However, major recalls in 2006 for overheating laptop batteries and again in 2016 for devices like hoverboards and smartphones raised concerns leading to increased awareness, regulations, and focus on proper battery management and safety standards.

Conversely, research into the products of combustion these batteries generate are only years old and are still being evaluated. Lithium-ion battery fires release a complex, highly toxic mixture of hydrogen fluoride (HF), hydrogen cyanide (HCN), formaldehyde, sulfur dioxide (SO_2), carbon monoxide (CO),   and heavy metals (nickel, cobalt, manganese) in smoke and soot, posing severe respiratory and systemic health risks, with corrosive HF and other fluorinated compounds being particularly dangerous.

The complex mixture of contaminants requires full personal protective equipment (PPE) with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). for first responders, who risk exposure to these hazardous substances in the smoke and runoff.

Tactics to safely extinguish electric vehicle fires are relatively new. Under-vehicle nozzles and high temperature vehicle size blankets have been developed in only the last 5 years. Tactics for the use of these new tools is continuously developing.

This bill will give communities an awareness of the number of EVs in their area. Although the EVs will not be at the address all the time, they will be there a significant amount of the time. Having the location where electric vehicles are known to be will assist in emergency planning.

Chief J Jeffrey Varone E.F.O.
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