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## MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

### S6980B (Gounardes)/A10029 (Abbate)

*An act to amend the retirement and social security law, in relation to authorizing police/fire members of the New York city fire department pension fund to obtain credit for service as an EMT member*

In 1996, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) left New York City Health & Hospitals and merged with the NYC Fire Department. Shortly thereafter, the Fire Department started to conduct promotional exams, giving the far more diverse members of the EMS an advantage to becoming NYC Firefighters.

Over the last 25 years this had been, and still is, the FDNY's most efficient and effective way to diversify their ranks. The FDNY's diversity has increased over 300% in the last 15 years. The vast majority of that diversity has come through the ranks of FDNY EMS.

This Legislation rights a wrong for all our Tier 3 members who were informed they were being "Promoted" to Firefighter only to find out that their time served in the FDNY was no longer pensionable time, an unfortunate consequence of 2009's end of Tier 2 by then Governor Paterson.

Currently, you can be a Firefighter in Buffalo and then join the FDNY to be a Firefighter and your time is transferrable. However, our most diverse members who've been risking their lives for the citizens of New York while serving on an FDNY ambulance, are told their time is worthless. Also of note, their pension tier requires these members to work five years longer to achieve the most beneficial part of their inferior pension.

As an example, Firefighter Julian Castenada L35 was hired as an EMT in 2004. Since EMS still, to this day, is not a uniformed service and he was not automatically enrolled into the Pension Plan, he wasn't a member until 2010, putting him in Tier 3. Firefighter Castenada became a Firefighter in December 2016 after 12 years in FDNY EMS. He will have to work 17 more years than his peers and will not be eligible to receive his full pension until he is 58 years old. Firefighter Castenada is merely one out of hundreds of members this issue affects. S6980B/A10029 can correct this travesty at a negligible cost to New York City. Please allow these members the same benefit their coworkers already enjoy.

Accordingly, we strongly urge approval of this legislation.