



**ARUNAN
ARULAMPALAM**
MAYOR

CITY OF HARTFORD

HARTFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT
253 High Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06103
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www.hartford.gov



RODNEY L. BARCO
Fire Chief/Emergency
Management Director

June 29, 2026

To the Minneapolis City Council,

It is a true privilege to write this letter of recommendation for Dr. Reginald Freeman, the 37th Fire Chief of the Hartford Fire Department. Having worked closely alongside Reggie and later succeeding him in leadership, I can say with absolute certainty that he represents the very best of what the fire service can be. To me, he is a phenomenal colleague, an invaluable mentor, and above all, a deeply trusted friend.

What has always struck me most about Reggie is his insatiable appetite for meaningful, challenging work. Where others might see an insurmountable obstacle, Reggie sees a chance to lift the department up, better protect our community, and invest in the next generation of leaders. His unwavering commitment to duty sets a standard that naturally inspires everyone around him. He never took the easy way out; he always chose the path that would build a stronger, safer, and more forward-thinking department.

During his time as our 37th Fire Chief, Reggie left an indelible mark on the Hartford Fire Department. He didn't just manage the department, he transformed it. He was the driving force behind our push toward international accreditation, modernizing our day-to-day operations, and creating real paths for professional development. Recognizing the critical need for long-term infrastructure stability, he successfully implemented a comprehensive apparatus replacement plan and a capital improvement plan to overhaul our outdated firehouses. Furthermore, when the pandemic hit, Reggie's foresight and leadership as the Fire Chief/Emergency Manager, developed a comprehensive COVID SOP and procured valuable, much-needed, and often hard-to-get pandemic supplies to keep our frontline personnel and other city employee's safe. His real legacy isn't just a list of achievements, but the proud, resilient culture he left behind.

On a personal note, Reggie's mentorship has been a constant source of inspiration to me. He leads with an incredibly rare balance of sharp strategic insight and genuine empathy. He's the kind of leader who guides by example, shares wisdom generously, and genuinely wants to see those around him succeed. His influence has been a cornerstone of my own journey, and I carry his lessons with me every single day.

Reginald Freeman is a transformative leader who truly lives by his servant leadership model, constantly placing the needs of his team and the community above all else to leave every organization and every person he encounters better than he found them. More than just an exceptional professional, he is—and will always remain—one of my closest and dearest friends. Loved by all of his colleges, friends and family. I give him my absolute highest and most enthusiastic recommendation for whatever path he chooses next.

Sincerely,

Rodney L. Barco
38th Chief of Department/EMD
City of Hartford
253 High St Hartford CT 06103
Office: (860) 757-4501
Mobile: (860) 549-2080



July 12, 2026

To the Selection Committee,

I am honored to offer my strongest endorsement of Dr. Reginald Freeman for the position of Fire Chief for the City of Minneapolis.

Having had the privilege of working with and learning from Dr. Freeman throughout his distinguished career, I have witnessed firsthand the exceptional leadership, professionalism, and vision he brings to the fire service. His impact extends far beyond the organizations he has served, leaving a lasting legacy of excellence, accountability, and mentorship.

As Fire Chief of the Hartford Fire Department, Dr. Freeman led the department to achieve an ISO Class 1 Public Protection Classification—a remarkable accomplishment that reflects his commitment to operational excellence, strategic planning, and continuous improvement. This achievement demonstrates not only his technical expertise but also his ability to inspire an organization to perform at the highest level.

On a personal level, Dr. Freeman played a significant role in my development as a fire officer with the Bridgeport Fire Department. His guidance, mentorship, and willingness to invest in others' growth helped shape my leadership philosophy and professional development. I am far from alone in that experience. Many of my peers have similarly benefited from his mentorship and continue to apply the lessons he taught us in our own careers.

Dr. Freeman leads with integrity, humility, and a genuine commitment to serving both his firefighters and the communities they protect. He possesses the rare ability to balance operational excellence with compassionate leadership, earning the respect of personnel at every rank while building trust with elected officials, labor partners, and community stakeholders.

The City of Minneapolis would be gaining a proven leader with an outstanding record of innovation, organizational transformation, and unwavering dedication to public service. I have every confidence that Dr. Freeman will continue to elevate any organization he leads while fostering a culture of professionalism, accountability, and excellence.

I offer my strongest possible recommendation for Dr. Reginald Freeman's appointment as Fire Chief. I am confident he will serve the City of Minneapolis with distinction and honor.

Respectfully,

Joseph W. Kirkland, Jr.

Joseph W. Kirkland Jr.
House Captain Station 12
Bridgeport Fire Department
Bridgeport, Connecticut

June 30, 2026

To the Minneapolis City Council:

I am writing in strong support of Chief Freeman in connection with his hearing before the Minneapolis City Council. My name is Paul Motta, and I am a 26-year firefighter with the Hartford Fire Department and have proudly served as the Vice President of Hartford Fire Fighters Local 760 since 2018. I have had the privilege of knowing and working with Chief Freeman throughout his entire tenure with the Hartford Fire Department, first as Assistant Chief and later as Fire Chief. During that time, I worked closely with him on numerous labor-management issues and witnessed firsthand the leadership, professionalism, and commitment he brought to our department.

When Chief Freeman joined the Hartford Fire Department in 2016, he was immediately faced with one of the greatest staffing challenges in our department's history. Due to contractual retirement benefits, approximately 120 senior firefighters, drivers, captains, lieutenants, and chiefs retired within a relatively short period. Rather than allowing this unprecedented loss of experience to negatively impact fire protection or firefighter safety, Chief Freeman approached the situation with an open mind and a collaborative leadership style.

He worked directly with Local 760 to develop innovative labor-management solutions, including a joint memorandum of agreement allowing Hartford Fire Department overtime relief officers to temporarily fill firefighter and driver positions. This collaborative effort proved critical in maintaining staffing levels for our 17 companies while ensuring the City of Hartford continued to receive the level of fire protection its residents deserved. More importantly, it demonstrated Chief Freeman's willingness to work alongside labor to solve difficult problems rather than dictate solutions.

Chief Freeman also recognized the value of involving firefighters in decisions that directly affected their work. He re-established the department's Apparatus Committee, ensuring that apparatus purchasing decisions included not only the machine shop but also the company officers and experienced drivers who would actually operate the apparatus every day. This collaborative process resulted in better apparatus design, improved functionality, and greater confidence among the membership.

His commitment to professional excellence extended well beyond equipment. Chief Freeman implemented Blue Card Incident Command training, a nationally recognized command system that enhanced operational consistency and incident management throughout the department. He also expanded professional development opportunities, allowing firefighters and officers to attend educational and leadership courses that strengthened their knowledge, leadership abilities, and overall effectiveness. He worked collaboratively with labor to ensure members were provided shift coverage, and that any

financial obligations associated with attending these programs were fully covered by the department, demonstrating his commitment to investing in the success of our members.

Chief Freeman consistently demonstrated that firefighter health and safety were among his highest priorities. Understanding the growing cancer risks facing firefighters, he supported Health and Safety Committee recommendations to equip every apparatus, including our rehabilitation unit, with decontamination wipes so firefighters could immediately reduce exposure to carcinogens following incidents. He also supported sending members of the command staff to National Incident Management System (NIMS) training and worked with labor to explore implementation of the O2X Human Performance Program, focusing on firefighter physical fitness, mental wellness, nutrition, and long-term health.

Perhaps no challenge better demonstrated Chief Freeman's leadership than the COVID-19 pandemic. During one of the most uncertain periods in modern fire service history, Chief Freeman remained calm, visible, and proactive. He ensured our members had access to appropriate personal protective equipment, implemented response and decontamination guidelines consistent with CDC recommendations, and continually updated the department as guidance evolved. Throughout the pandemic, firefighter safety remained his highest priority, and his leadership provided reassurance to both the membership and the community we served.

Chief Freeman also championed modernization throughout the department. He worked collaboratively with labor to improve firefighter safety by investing in updated thermal imaging cameras, turnout gear, and other essential equipment. He instituted regular operational review meetings to analyze response times against nationally accepted standards and even created friendly competition among companies by recognizing the top-performing engine and truck companies with department T-shirts, fostering pride, teamwork, and continuous improvement.

What always impressed me most, however, was Chief Freeman's leadership style. He communicated openly with the membership, listened to concerns, and genuinely valued the perspectives of firefighters and officers alike. He understood the sacrifices firefighters and their families make, especially during holidays, and regularly visited firehouses on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and other holidays to personally thank members who were working away from their families. Those gestures reflected the kind of leader he is and earned him the respect of the membership.

In my experience, Chief Freeman consistently demonstrated integrity, professionalism, accountability, and compassion. He built trust through communication, collaboration, and a genuine commitment to making both the department and its members better.

Without hesitation, I offer my strongest recommendation for Chief Freeman. I firmly believe he possesses the leadership, vision, character, and collaborative approach

necessary to successfully lead a major metropolitan fire department. Any city would be fortunate to have Chief Freeman serving as its Fire Chief.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Paul Motta

Paul Motta

Vice President,

Hartford Fire Fighters Local 760

BOZEMAN^{MT}

FIRE DEPARTMENT

July 6, 2026

City of Minneapolis City Council
350 South Fifth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Re: Chief Reggie Freeman

Dear Council Member

I am writing to offer my support and endorsement of Dr. Reggie Freeman to be your next Fire Chief. I have had the privilege of working with Dr. Freeman for the last 15 years in several different capacities. While there are a number of Fire Chiefs that I have worked with during my career, it is the leadership style and approach that Dr. Freeman uses in being a transformational Fire Chief that I have always been the most impressed with.

Dr. Freeman's ability to build a team and culture within a fire department that is unified in its vision of serving the community has been one of his strongest skills throughout his career. In building these unified visions, Dr. Freeman has also worked hard to integrated the community into this process, creating a collaborative partnership between the fire department and community that you don't see in many communities. Dr. Freeman is able to do this by being what I would consider an untraditional fire chief, who isn't afraid to be innovative, outward facing, and strategic in a way that is different from the way the fire service has traditionally operated.

During his career, Dr. Freeman has worked with the Center for Public Safety Excellence, the National Fire Protection Association, and the International Association of Fire Chiefs in a variety of roles. Dr. Freeman is not just a member of these organizations, he is a leader and a change agent that pushes the professional organizations to continue to seek improvement and excellence. As part of his work with these organizations, I had the opportunity to work with Dr. Freeman on the development of the first mentoring program from the Center for Public Safety Excellence, a program that still is helping develop future leaders of the fire service.

Dr. Freeman is a generational leader who carries himself with the highest levels of integrity and ethical standards. Dr. Freeman is a natural leader, relationship builder, and a community servant that is well respected throughout the fire service profession. I am honored to offer my endorsement of Dr. Freeman to be your next Fire Chief

Respectfully,

Joshua L. Waldo

Fire Chief
Past President of the International Association of Fire Chiefs



Zac Unger

COUNCILMEMBER – DISTRICT ONE

CITY HALL • ONE FRANK OGAWA PLAZA • 2ND FLOOR • OAKLAND, CA 94612

(510) 238-7001 • zunger@oaklandca.gov

July 3, 2021

Dear City Council members,

It is with great pleasure that I recommend Dr. Reginald Freeman for the position of Fire Chief in Minneapolis. Prior to my service on Oakland's City Council, I was the President of the Oakland Firefighters Union—IAFF Local 55—during Dr. Freeman's tenure as Chief here, so I had the chance to work closely with him on thorny issues.

As a career firefighter and union leader, I saw many Chiefs come and go over my 27 years. I can say without hesitation that Dr. Freeman was the most dynamic, forward-thinking, and creative senior leader that we have ever had. He has a unique combination of genuine empathy and fellow feeling for our frontline workers, as well as a management style in which he is unafraid to rethink stagnant modes of operation. I always appreciated how available he made himself to everyone, from the most senior Deputy Chief to the newest recruit. Dr. Freeman has a genuine passion for the fire service as a whole and a commitment to elevating whatever institution he is currently a member of.

The people of Minneapolis will be in good hands with Dr. Freeman at the helm of the Fire Department. I look forward to hearing about the many innovations and improvements he will bring to your city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Zac Unger', written over a horizontal line.

Zac Unger
City Councilmember
City of Oakland, District 1

CITY OF OAKLAND



Fire Administration • 150 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza • OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612

Oakland Fire Department

(510) 238-4054

5 July 2026

City of Minneapolis
Honorable Mayor Jacob Fey
350 South 5th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55415

RE: Dr. Reginald Freeman

It is with tremendous elation that I write this letter of recommendation on behalf of Dr. Reginald Freeman. Prior to his departure from the city of Oakland, I had the opportunity to serve on his executive team as a deputy chief. Simply stated, you are getting a fire chief who truly understands all aspects of public administration, values leading & managing a fire service organization, is a strategic thinker and executioner, and is a consummate professional.

During Dr. Freeman's tenure with the city of Oakland, he demonstrated unwavering commitment to the organization and its workforce. Prior to his arrival, the Department had never developed a comprehensive strategic plan. In a relative short period of time, Dr. Freeman put together a team of internal and external individuals that resulted in the development of a plan comprised of five diverse strategic goals. In collaboration with our labor partner (International Association of Firefighters Local 55), the Department also established its first every broad-ranging Professional Development Plan (PDP) for civilian and sworn staff members. The PDP was developed to ensure our workforce remained operationally ready; had access to contemporary science based best practices related to managing and leading in the public sector; and technical awareness on all strategies and activities under the community risk reduction concept. Dr. Freeman never wavered in his commitment to his team, elected officials, city staffers, and the residents of Oakland.

Moreover, Dr. Freeman demonstrated a strong devotion to action items that define successful management and leadership in the fire service. Our command staff meetings regularly ended with a discussion on some aspect of management, leadership, and commitment as public servants. While not the first in the history of the organization, Dr. Freeman made a strong effort to visit fire stations on a regular basis. After each visit, he would dutifully share with command staff the comments and suggestions from our personnel working in the fire stations. Many of the programs and projects we implemented resulted from comments that came out of his visits to the 26 fire stations in Oakland. Finally, he encouraged his command staff to network with other fire service professionals on an international level and to stay committed to being lifelong learners in the classroom and at industry conferences.

The residents and the city of Minneapolis are getting a new fire chief who is a rare gem among a large collection of individuals who lead fire service organizations worldwide. I was saddened personally and professionally when Dr. Freeman left our organization; however, the glow has returned knowing that Dr. Freeman has returned to local municipal government as a fire chief in your great city. He will do great things for Minneapolis residents and the workforce!

Sincerely,

Dr. Demond Simmons
Deputy Chief, Support and Services
Oakland Fire Department
Dlsimmons@oaklandca.gov
510.774.2468

CITY OF OAKLAND



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OFFICE OF THE FIRE CHIEF

Damon Covington
Oakland Fire Department

(510) 238-3856
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July 02, 2026

City of Minneapolis
Minneapolis Fire Department
350 Fifth Street S. Room 133
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Dear Minneapolis City Leadership,

It is my honor to offer my strongest recommendation for Dr. Reginald Freeman to serve as the next Fire Chief of the Minneapolis Fire Department. Chief Freeman's tenure in the fire service has been nothing short of exemplary, and his leadership has consistently elevated every organization he has served.

During his time as Fire Chief of the Oakland Fire Department, Chief Freeman delivered a master class in leadership, guiding the department through complex challenges with vision, decisiveness, and commitment to service. His impact was immediate and lasting, demonstrating an extraordinary ability to unify teams, implement progressive strategies, and enhance both operational effectiveness and community engagement.

Chief Freeman's resume is nothing short of extraordinary, as he continues to shape the future of emergency services on a global scale. His previous leadership roles include Executive Director of Fire and Emergency Medical Services in Saudi Arabia, Fire Chief positions in Oakland, Hartford (Connecticut), and at Lockheed Martin Aeronautics. His influence extends beyond city borders, as evidenced by his roles as a board member for the NFPA, Director of Training for the Caribbean Association of Fire Chiefs, and an adjunct professor at multiple higher learning institutions. Furthermore, his academic credentials—including a doctorate in Emergency and Protective Services and his fellowship at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard—speak to his intellectual rigor and deep expertise in emergency services.

Beyond his remarkable professional and academic achievements, what sets Chief Freeman apart is his profound understanding of both people and the fire service. His ability to lead with integrity, inspire those around him, and foster a culture of excellence makes him an invaluable asset to any organization. His vision, coupled with his operational acumen, will undoubtedly strengthen and enhance the Minneapolis Fire Department for years to come.

I wholeheartedly endorse Chief Reginald Freeman for this role. His proven leadership, depth of experience, and dedication to the fire service make him the ideal candidate to lead the Minneapolis Fire Department into the future. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 510-603-9175, or by email at DLcovington@oaklandca.gov, should you require any further information or insight into his qualifications and character.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Damon Covington". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Damon Covington
Fire Chief
Oakland Fire Department



July 3, 2026

Minneapolis City Council

Re: Letter of Support for Chief Reginald Freeman

Dear Members of the Minneapolis City Council,

I am pleased to provide my strong support for Chief Reginald Freeman as you consider his appointment as Fire Chief for the City of Minneapolis.

During his tenure as Fire Chief of Oakland, Chief Freeman distinguished himself as a respected and effective leader who consistently demonstrated professionalism, integrity, and a deep commitment to public service. He led the department during challenging times while maintaining a focus on operational excellence, community engagement, and the well-being of both firefighters and residents.

Chief Freeman's leadership style is collaborative, transparent, and solutions-oriented. He understands the importance of building trust within the community and fostering strong relationships with civic, faith-based, and community organizations. His willingness to listen, engage, and work alongside stakeholders has earned him the respect of many throughout Oakland.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Chief Freeman has demonstrated a genuine commitment to serving diverse communities with fairness, compassion, and accountability. His experience leading a major urban fire department has prepared him well for the responsibilities and opportunities that come with serving the City of Minneapolis.

I am confident that Chief Freeman possesses the character, leadership ability, and vision necessary to successfully lead the Minneapolis Fire Department. I offer my full support and highest recommendation for his appointment.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Adams

Cynthia Adams
President
Oakland Branch NAACP 1051-B



Arunan Arulampalam
MAYOR

CITY OF HARTFORD

HARTFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT
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RODNEY L. BARCO
Fire Chief Emergency
Management Director

July 1, 2026

To the Members of the Minneapolis City Council

City Hall, Room 307
350 S. 5th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Subject: Letter of Support for the Confirmation of Dr. Reginald D. Freeman as Fire Chief

Dear Members of the Minneapolis City Council,

It is an immense privilege to submit this letter of support for Dr. Reginald D. Freeman regarding his confirmation as the next Chief of the Minneapolis Fire Department. Having had the honor of knowing Dr. Freeman since 2011 and serving as his Chief of Staff for many years, I have witnessed firsthand the caliber of his exceptional leadership, unwavering professionalism, and deep dedication to both the fire service and the community.

Dr. Freeman is the true embodiment of a servant leader. When he became Hartford Fire Department Fire Chief, our organization was navigating one of its darkest chapters, the tragic loss of a firefighter in the line of duty. In a time of profound grief, diminished spirits, and severe operational strain, Dr. Freeman brought life back to the department. He stepped in not just as a manager, but as a healing force. He listened intently, prioritized the development and well-being of his personnel, restored morale, and rebuilt a culture anchored in mutual trust, transparency, and collaboration.

His ability to establish a seamless rapport with the community, city leadership, politicians, union leadership and the rank-and-file members of the department is unmatched. A striking testament to his operational genius and adaptability occurred when he was tasked with simultaneously running both the Hartford Fire Department and the Department of Public Works. He executed these dual, highly complex roles flawlessly, proving that he is a natural born leader who thrives under pressure and successfully builds high performing teams.

Under his transformative vision, Hartford achieved historic milestones. Most notably, Dr. Freeman led the Hartford Fire Department to become New England's first Class One and internationally accredited Fire Department, a distinction held by only a fraction of departments nationwide. He secured millions in federal grants to bolster staffing, implemented robust professional development programs, and championed a data driven approach to community risk reduction.

"Working Together to Make Hartford a Safe Community"



Arunan Arulampalam
MAYOR

CITY OF HARTFORD

HARTFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT
253 High Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06103
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RODNEY L. BARCO
Fire Chief Emergency
Management Director

Chief Freeman's commitment to serving others is a guiding principle. As a mentor, he consistently challenges the status quo in a positive manner, uplifting those around him and creating lasting, positive impacts on every organization he guides. Anyone who has the pleasure of working alongside him grows as an individual and as a leader.

He is a leader of unwavering integrity who commands respect through compassion, poise, and ethical clarity. He remains levelheaded in high pressure environments and treats everyone with fairness and respect. Without hesitation, I can say he is the finest leader I have ever had the privilege of working alongside.

The City of Minneapolis has an extraordinary opportunity to confirm a nationally and internationally respected executive who will protect your citizens, champion your firefighters, and position your department for long-term modern success. I enthusiastically and unreservedly recommend Dr. Reginald D. Freeman for confirmation as your next Fire Chief.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and consideration.

Respectfully,

Mario Oquendo, Jr.

Mario Oquendo, Jr.
District Chief/Public Information Officer
860-966-1389 Cell
253 High Street
Hartford, CT 06103
Oquem001@hartford.gov

"Working Together to Make Hartford a Safe Community"

July 12, 2026

Mayor Jacob Frey
City of Minneapolis
City Hall
350 S. Fifth St., Room 330
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Your worship,

I am both honoured and genuinely thrilled to congratulate you on your selection of Dr. Reggie Freeman as your next Fire Chief.

I first met Dr. Freeman during my tenure as Toronto's Fire Chief through our work together in the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association. From the outset, I came to deeply respect and value Reggie's leadership—grounded in competence, focus, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to people. We quickly became colleagues and friends, and to this day, he remains someone I seek out for advice, perspective, and wise counsel.

During my tenure as Toronto's Fire Chief, from 2016 through 2024, I had the privilege of leading our first international accreditation journey. When we appeared before the Commission on Fire Accreditation International, Dr. Freeman was there, present in the audience, supporting me and my team. What stood out most during that week was the clear mutual respect and strong working relationship between Reggie and his union executive, who were there alongside him.

It is uncommon to see a metropolitan Fire Chief work as openly, honestly, and candidly with union leadership as Reggie does. That authenticity and trust only strengthened our professional relationship and friendship, as we have always been aligned in our commitment to principles-based, values-informed leadership.

Although I retired from the fire service in October 2024, I continue to remain closely connected with Dr. Freeman—both as a friend and in my current role as Ontario's Commissioner of Emergency Management.

You have made an exceptional choice to lead your fire service. I am fully confident that you will look back on this decision as one of your very best.

If you would like to hear more about my experiences working with Dr. Reggie Freeman, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Matthew Pegg

Matthew Pegg
Fire Chief (Retired)
Toronto Fire Services
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Charles D. Lightfoot III

Engineer, Oakland Fire Department
CDLightfoot@OaklandCA.gov
Oakland, California

July 3, 2026

Minneapolis City Council

350 South 5th Street

Minneapolis, MN 55415

RE: Letter of Support — Dr. Reginald D. Freeman for Minneapolis Fire Chief

Dear Members of the Minneapolis City Council,

I am writing to offer my strongest personal and professional support for Dr. Reginald D. Freeman's candidacy for Fire Chief of Minneapolis. I have served the Oakland Fire Department (OFD) for 22 years, including throughout Dr. Freeman's tenure as our department's 31st Fire Chief, and I have seen firsthand the kind of leader he is: one who combines disciplined, data-driven management with a rare, genuine investment in the people he leads and the communities he serves. I offer this letter not as a formality, but because I believe Minneapolis stands to gain a chief who will manage the department responsibly, earn the trust of its members, and deliver real results for its residents.

A Leader Who Delivers on Governance and Accountability

Dr. Freeman took command of OFD in 2021, a moment when the department (like many across the country) was navigating the strain of the COVID-19 pandemic, thinning staffing levels, and heavy mandatory overtime. He responded not with slogans but with structure. He implemented our department's Capital Improvement Plan, which brought new apparatus into service, including three Type 1 engines, a truck, a Type III unit, and Oakland's first water tender, along with a new fireboat that will be housed in a station reopened after two decades of closure. He also modernized how the department manages its equipment and records by moving them onto a digital platform, shifting paperwork online. Perhaps most importantly for a governing body evaluating a chief's judgment, Dr. Freeman shifted the department's culture away from fear-based appeals to city leadership and toward requests grounded in data and standard project management practice. He also began OFD's formal pursuit of CFAI accreditation through the Center for Public Safety Excellence, laying groundwork toward the same rigorous, internationally recognized standard of organizational excellence he has since achieved in other agencies. This is a chief who understands that the confidence of elected officials is earned through disciplined management, transparency, and measurable outcomes, not promises.

A Chief Who Has His Members' Backs

Every member of a fire department wants to know one thing about a new chief: will this person show up for us? Dr. Freeman answered that question on his very first day. Hours after being introduced to the public, our department responded to a routine structure fire at an illegal hash oil extraction operation. No one expected to see the new chief there, but he showed up to see firsthand how our members operate. That was not a one-time gesture. He went on to visit every firehouse on every shift, not to inspect, but to listen. He learned

people's frustrations and got to know them personally, and in doing so, he won over a workforce that had every reason to be skeptical of another new leader.

Dr. Freeman backed that presence with tangible support. He established professional development and succession planning, paid members for time taken to attend classes, and enacted OFD's first education incentive. He launched a leadership series open to members of every rank, and he inspired people who had disengaged from the informal work that keeps a department running to step back up and take on responsibility. I personally was moved by his example to support our accreditation manager in an effort that became one of the most meaningful of my career. Members do not follow a chief like this because they are told to. They follow because he has consistently demonstrated that he is invested in them.

A Public Servant Genuinely Invested in the Community

Residents want a fire chief who sees them, not just the statistics that describe them. Dr. Freeman built relationships across Oakland with a depth that our members still talk about today. I have never attended an event with him without being struck by the breadth of relationships he has built, learning something new, or meeting someone who admires him and can speak to the impact he has directly had on their life. Those relationships were never about self-promotion. They were the foundation he used to move the department forward, remove obstacles for the people doing the work, and make the case for the resources our community needed. Years after his departure, the positive effects of his leadership are still felt in Oakland.

Dr. Freeman brings this same record to an international platform: as the 37th Fire Chief of Hartford, Connecticut, as Executive Director of Fire & EMS for the NEOM development in Saudi Arabia, and through his continued service on the NFPA Board of Directors, the CPSE/CFAI board, and as a co-investigator on a NASA/Oregon State University wildfire risk mapping project. He holds a PhD, is a designated Chief Fire Officer, is a Fellow of the Institution of Fire Engineers, and serves as an adjunct professor and dissertation chair. Within the fire and emergency services profession, he is not regarded solely as a strong leader within any single organization; he is recognized as a leader of leaders, sought out by chiefs and executives across the industry for his counsel on organizational transformation and public safety strategy. This is a leader whose capabilities have only grown since his time with us, and whose foundation of integrity, empathy, accountability, and results were built the same way in every department he has led.

Minneapolis will be well served by Dr. Freeman's leadership. He is the rare chief who can satisfy a City Council's need for sound governance and measurable results, a department's need for a leader who genuinely has its members' backs, and a community's need for a public servant who is authentically invested in its wellbeing. I give him my complete and unreserved endorsement, and I am confident that Minneapolis will come to feel the same lasting, positive impact that Oakland still carries today.

Please feel free to contact me directly if I can provide any additional information in support of Dr. Freeman's candidacy.

Respectfully,



Charles D. Lightfoot III

Engineer, Oakland Fire Department



WEST HARTFORD

Town of West Hartford – Fire Department

Fire Chief Greg H. Priest, MPA, CEM, MIFireE, CEMSO, CFO, SHRM-CP

95 Raymond Road, West Hartford, CT 06107

P: (860) 561-8300 F: (860) 561-8922 www.westhartfordct.gov

July 6, 2026

City of Minneapolis
Attn City Council

To the Respected Members of the Minneapolis City Council,

I am honored to submit this letter of personal and professional reference and to provide my unconditional support for Dr. Reginald Freeman's candidacy for the Fire Chief position in Minneapolis. I have known Dr. Freeman for approximately eight (8) years, and being familiar with his personal and professional life, I offer this recommendation without reservation.

Dr. Freeman and I first came to know each other when I joined the fire department in West Hartford in 2018, and he was the Fire Chief in Hartford, CT. During our respective tenures until his departure in 2021, I had the opportunity to work frequently with him as a peer Chief on matters involving our agencies, as well as in state associations and other related fire service projects. Chief Freeman and I have stayed in frequent touch after Hartford, and I consider him both a friend and a mentor.

I am familiar with the basics of Dr. Freeman's resume, which comprehensively summarizes his career, including positions, significant projects, national & international association roles, and awards for his distinguished service and impact. However, I can speak with the most authority about his time in Hartford and, as a close friend, to the man "behind the curtain", as they say.

First, while I acknowledge that his tremendous history and contributions of others before Dr. Freeman arrived in Hartford, his time as Fire Chief & Emergency Management Director in Hartford was exemplary. In my analysis, he brought a new and much-needed level of impactful leadership, which restored a positive public image to the Hartford Fire Department. He is best known as an effective, efficient, well-regarded, and respected Chief. Under Dr. Freeman's leadership, HFD made history as CT's first internationally accredited career fire department and New England's only Class 1 & internationally accredited fire department. Both remain the case to this day, even years after his departure.

During and after his tenure in Hartford, Chief Freeman has been an outstanding peer and resource to many. Known for always being available to assist, mentor, or coach a peer fire chief (or fire department) with his knowledge or insight, he has a far-reaching impact. He consistently seeks excellence for his organizations or encourages others to pursue and sustain excellence in their personal or professional endeavors.

Taken in totality, Dr. Freeman has been a stalwart and passionate advocate for the fire service, with a positive, unequivocal impact on the profession and many organizations. In his recent endeavors in Saudi Arabia, I know he was still contributing his knowledge, skills, and abilities in a different setting while also learning innovative, unique perspectives and gaining new experiences that he will bring to Minneapolis.



Town of West Hartford – Fire Department

Fire Chief Greg H. Priest, MPA, CEM, MIFireE, CEMSO, CFO, SHRM-CP

95 Raymond Road, West Hartford, CT 06107

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While I've discussed just a few aspects of his previous roles and accomplishments, I'd like to focus your attention on Dr. Freeman's most valuable attributes. While it is challenging to fully articulate the scope of such a big, present, talented, effective, and personable human being, I believe he is one of the most passionate and dedicated leaders in the fire service. Whether pursuing his own leadership development or engaging others about leadership, the amount of time, effort, passion, and thought he puts into the fire service is remarkable. He is a sincere, friendly, approachable leader and a family man dedicated to his wife and two daughters.

In closing, it is my opinion that Dr. Freeman is an incredibly intelligent, experienced, and talented Chief, who has approached his personal and professional life in a way that perfectly positions him to assume the role of the Minneapolis Fire Chief. In addition to his current abilities, he consistently demonstrates a strong desire to develop the skills and attitudes that will better serve your fire department, your community, and the fire service as a whole.

I fully support his candidacy and would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Greg H. Priest
Fire Chief

July 6, 2026

Member of City Council
City of Minneapolis, MN

To Members of the City Council,

I am writing to offer my support for Reginald Freeman, PhD, whose leadership has had a significant impact on the professional fire service in the United States and internationally. I have had the privilege of working alongside and being mentored by Chief Freeman. I have come to understand firsthand what sets exceptional leadership apart from merely competent leadership. In Chief Freeman, you will have a leader who is genuinely invested in people, has a clear sense of mission, and is unwaveringly committed to the standards of our profession. As you consider what matters most, I hope you will weigh the perspective of those of us who have seen this leadership in action.

What distinguishes Chief Freeman is the deliberate time he invests in developing others and building trust with the community. He changed how the department trained its members and exposed them to training beyond Oakland Fire. In addition, he treated community engagement as more than a public-relations obligation. Chief Freeman made it a core function of the Oakland Fire Department during his tenure. For example, while in Oakland, he involved the department in neighborhood meetings, First Day of School initiatives, and other public events that brought the department to the community beyond the call of an emergency. He also ensured the department invested while securing an ISO 1 rating. His actions strengthened the department's reputation for exceeding the national training standard and, more importantly, deepened the public's trust in the men and women who respond when help is needed most.

Chief Freeman has a talent for recentring a department around its core mission and values. While in Oakland, he invested time with uniting the division of the department and its members, regardless of rank or years of service, around a shared sense of mission. Firefighters and professional staff alike describe feeling valued, while fostering a culture in which people want to do their best. This is not accidental; it is the product of consistent, intentional leadership that treats every person's contribution as essential to the organization's success.

Chief Freeman will lead Minneapolis into circles of the fire service beyond what the department is accustomed to. He will expect the department to look beyond the standards it has embraced and find ways to elevate itself to a level of growth and professionalism that will expose it to more. This expectation is informed by his involvement in various national and international organizations, including the National Fire Protection Association, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, and the Center for Public Safety Excellence. The exposure Chief Freeman provides, along with his years of experience in the fire service and beyond, will open doors to training, resources, and partnerships that benefit any

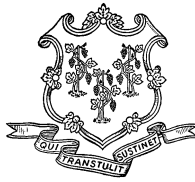
community he invests in. This is a benefit for your city and the fire department, as it will also position your department as one that other agencies look to for guidance, rather than the other way around.

I offer my full support for Chief Freeman without reservation. Few leaders combine operational excellence with genuine care for people as Chief Freeman does, and the residents of Minneapolis would be fortunate to have that leadership serving them. I respectfully ask this council to recognize the value his leadership brings to your city. Please feel free to contact me directly at my personal email, fwbofd@gmail.com, or by phone at 510-714-5820 if you would like to discuss this further.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Felicia Bryant". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly legible.

Felicia Bryant
Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal
Orange County Fire Authority



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

REPRESENTATIVE JAMES SANCHEZ
6TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 4046
CAPITOL: (860) 240-8500
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VICE CHAIR
ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

MEMBER
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

July 3, 2026

Minneapolis City Council
City Hall
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Re: Letter of Support for the Appointment of Dr. Reginald D. Freeman as Fire Chief

Dear Council President and Honorable Members of the Minneapolis City Council,

It is my distinct honor to write this letter in strong support of the appointment of Dr. Reginald D. Freeman as the next Fire Chief for the City of Minneapolis.

I have had the privilege of observing Dr. Freeman's leadership over many years. My perspective began while serving on the Hartford City Council during his tenure as Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director for the City of Hartford from 2016 through 2021. Since then, I have continued to follow and support his work during my service as a Connecticut State Representative. Having witnessed his leadership firsthand, I can say without hesitation that Dr. Freeman possesses the character, integrity, vision, and executive leadership necessary to lead one of our nation's premier fire departments.

During his tenure in Hartford, Dr. Freeman transformed the organization into one recognized for excellence. Under his leadership, the Hartford Fire Department achieved international accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International, a distinction earned by only a select number of fire departments worldwide. This accomplishment reflected far more than compliance with professional standards; it demonstrated his unwavering commitment to continuous improvement, organizational accountability, strategic planning, and exceptional service to the community.

On top of his stellar leadership as Fire Chief & Emergency Director, Dr. Freeman served consecutively as Hartford's Interim Public Safety Director for almost 2 years. He was actually offered the full-time position by Mayor Bronin but Dr. Freeman respectfully declined. During his tenure as Interim Public Works Director, he enhanced the efficiency of city waste disposal routes by consolidating them from 39 to 31 as well as ensured that city streets were properly plowed during snowstorms by literally driving routes and reporting areas that needed attention to dispatch and supervisors. His ability to effectively lead 3 different major city departments for 2 years is unprecedented and has never been done before in Hartford.

Perhaps no period better demonstrated his leadership than the unprecedented challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. As Hartford's Emergency Management Director, Dr. Freeman coordinated response efforts across multiple local, state, federal, healthcare, and public safety agencies during one of

the most complex emergencies in modern history. His ability to communicate clearly, make informed decisions under pressure, and unite diverse stakeholders inspired confidence throughout our city.

His leadership was equally evident during numerous federally declared disasters and severe weather emergencies that impacted Connecticut during his tenure. Whether managing emergency operations, coordinating recovery efforts, or ensuring continuity of essential city services, Dr. Freeman consistently demonstrated professionalism, composure, and strategic foresight. Hartford benefited tremendously from his ability to anticipate challenges, build collaborative partnerships, and keep the safety of residents at the forefront of every decision.

What has always impressed me most, however, extends beyond operational excellence. Dr. Freeman genuinely believes that leadership begins with service. He was visible throughout Hartford's neighborhoods, not simply during emergencies, but every day. He actively engaged community organizations, neighborhood leaders, youth programs, faith-based institutions, and business partners because he understood that public trust is built through authentic relationships long before an emergency occurs.

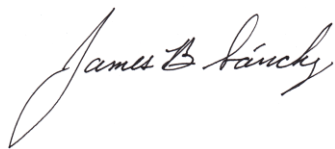
His leadership style is proactive rather than reactive. He sought opportunities to solve problems before they became crises, embraced innovation while respecting tradition, and created an organizational culture centered on accountability, professionalism, compassion, and inclusion. He empowered his personnel while never losing sight of the department's responsibility to the people it serves.

Throughout my years of public service, I have worked alongside many public safety leaders. Very few combine executive competence, emotional intelligence, operational expertise, academic achievement, and genuine humility as effectively as Dr. Freeman. He is a transformational leader who understands that successful fire departments must not only respond to emergencies but also strengthen communities, develop future leaders, and earn the confidence of those they serve each day.

The City of Minneapolis has an extraordinary opportunity before it. Dr. Freeman has already demonstrated his ability to lead complex metropolitan organizations, navigate crises of historic significance, build collaborative relationships with elected officials and community stakeholders, and leave organizations stronger than he found them. I am confident he will bring that same commitment, vision, and servant leadership to Minneapolis.

I offer my strongest possible endorsement of Dr. Reginald D. Freeman for appointment as Fire Chief. I respectfully encourage the Minneapolis City Council to confirm his nomination and welcome him as the next leader of the Minneapolis Fire Department. I have every confidence he will serve your firefighters, your residents, and your city with distinction.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "James B. Sánchez". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

James Sánchez
State Representative

July 2, 2026

Minneapolis City Council

Minneapolis City Hall

Dear Members of the Minneapolis City Council,

When people ask me about Chief Reginald Freeman, I always find myself going back to the beginning because it's impossible to explain what he means to me—or to our department—without telling the story.

By the time Chief Freeman arrived in Oakland, I had already spent several years in the fire service. During that time I navigated being one of the few women in the department, being openly gay, and fighting breast cancer. After my bilateral mastectomy, I also had to fight to have my cancer recognized as a work-related injury. It was exhausting.

By then, I had lost faith in the profession I once loved. I transferred from one of the busiest stations in the city to a much slower house because I simply needed to survive. My captain transferred with me.

Over the years, our department had seen chiefs come and go. Most never left much of an impression beyond collecting another pension.

Then I heard Oakland had hired Chief Reginald Freeman.

Before I ever met him, I listened to a podcast where he was being interviewed. I remember sitting there with tears in my eyes. I thought to myself, *If this man is truly who he sounds like, our paths are going to cross someday.*

They did.

Chief Freeman visited Station 3 while I happened to be working an overtime shift. During our conversation, I mentioned that many Oakland fire stations still didn't have women's restrooms or locker rooms. Without hesitation, he apologized. Then he said he was going to look into it.

And he did.

Immediately.

He ordered an audit of every fire station in Oakland to identify the condition of women's facilities. It was the first time many of us had ever felt that someone in leadership truly heard us—and then acted.

Before Chief Freeman, the women in our department had never really been supported. When we asked to attend or teach at women's fire camps, we were told no. We were told not to get hurt

because it wouldn't be covered. We had to use vacation time or arrange shift trades simply to volunteer.

Then Chief Freeman saw photos on social media of Oakland firefighters teaching at a women's fire camp in Davis.

Instead of simply liking the post, he got in his car and drove to the camp.

When he walked in, every Oakland woman firefighter ran to greet him.

He made a point of visiting every instructor, thanking each of us for our service, and telling us that we would always have his support for these events. Those weren't just words. He backed them up with action.

During a Teams meeting one day, he asked if Oakland had an iWomen group.

I told him we didn't.

He smiled and said, "Make one. Now."

One thing I've learned is that when you ask a determined woman to build something meaningful, she'll give you far more than you imagined.

Within a month, we held the first meeting of what is now The Oakland Women & Nonbinary Firefighters (TOWNFF). Chief Freeman didn't simply support the organization—he helped make it possible. He met with us every month, listened, challenged us to think bigger, and became the founding champion of our group. Chief Freeman founded TOWNFF.

Later, he asked why Oakland wasn't hosting a women's fire camp.

I told him I'd have to ask Kim Larson, President of NorCal Women in the Fire Service.

His response was simple.

"Do it. Now."

So, I did.

I called Kim and said, "Oakland is hosting your next girls' fire camp."

She laughed and said, "Okay."

That year we hosted not one, but two camps—one for high school girls and another for adult women. The Mayor, City Council members, and community leaders attended. It was unlike anything Oakland Fire had ever done before.

Chief Freeman didn't just change the Oakland Fire Department.

He changed what other departments believed was possible.

Women throughout the region told us they could feel the difference. Leaders began following his example. His support extended beyond women to the LGBTQ+ community and to anyone who had ever felt overlooked, underestimated, or excluded.

For years, I had imagined what a great fire chief should be.

I had never actually experienced one.

Chief Freeman showed me what authentic leadership looks like. He demonstrated that leadership isn't measured by rank or authority, but by humility, courage, compassion, and the willingness to improve the lives of the people you serve.

Because of him, my expectations of leadership changed forever.

Now that I've seen what exceptional leadership looks like, I can't accept anything less.

Chief Freeman's influence extends far beyond these stories. These are only a handful of my personal experiences with him. I could tell dozens more that demonstrate his character, his integrity, and his unwavering commitment to the people he serves. I know I am not alone. Every member of our department has their own stories, and together they paint the picture of a leader who consistently showed up for his people, kept his word, and inspired us to believe we could accomplish more than we ever thought possible.

And one final thought.

Chief Freeman's strength doesn't exist in isolation. His family is remarkable as well.

My crew and I were always curious about the person behind the leader, so we were fortunate enough to have Erin join us at the firehouse for dinner on several occasions. It didn't take long to understand why Chief Freeman leads the way he does.

Erin Freeman is gracious, thoughtful, composed, and incredibly genuine. She brings a quiet strength that perfectly complements his leadership. Watching the two of them together made it clear that his success is supported by an extraordinary partner and an equally remarkable family.

When you welcome Chief Freeman into your organization, you're not only gaining an exceptional fire chief. You're welcoming a leader who changes organizations from the inside out. You're gaining someone who builds trust, develops people, creates opportunity, and leaves every department better than he found it. You are also welcoming the support, character, and values of an extraordinary family.

Chief Freeman restored my faith in the fire service at a time when I wasn't sure I had any left. He reminded me why this profession matters, what leadership should look like, and what is possible when people are genuinely valued.

Without reservation, I give Chief Reginald Freeman my highest recommendation. I believe he will serve the City of Minneapolis with the same integrity, vision, humility, and courage that transformed so many lives in Oakland.

Respectfully,

Candice Koshman

Engineer
Oakland Fire Department

President
The Oakland Women & Nonbinary Firefighters (TOWNFF)

President
The Golden State Women in the Fire Service

July 5, 2026

Gustavo Gonzalez
President
National Association of Hispanic Firefighters
(408) 603-8560
President@NAHFF.org

The Honorable Members
Minneapolis City Council
350 South 5th Street, Room 307
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Re: Recommendation for the Confirmation of Chief Reginald Freeman as Fire Chief

Dear Honorable Council Members:

It is my honor to offer my strongest recommendation in support of Chief Reginald Freeman for confirmation as the next Fire Chief of the Minneapolis Fire Department.

Throughout his tenure as Fire Chief of the Oakland Fire Department, Chief Reginald Freeman demonstrated exceptional leadership, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to public service. He led The City of Oakland Fire Department through periods of significant organizational change while maintaining a steadfast focus on firefighter safety, operational excellence, emergency preparedness, and community trust despite the complexities that exist. His ability to unite other city departments and personnel around a shared vision while navigating complex challenges with professionalism and transparency earned him the respect of firefighters, labor leaders, elected officials, and the community of Oakland.

Chief Reginald Freeman consistently emphasized accountability, innovation, and the professional development of every member of the department. Under his leadership, the Oakland Fire Department strengthened its commitment to modernizing operations, expanding training opportunities, and fostering a culture where excellence, service, and continuous improvement remained at the forefront. His collaborative leadership style empowered personnel at every rank and cultivated meaningful partnerships both within the department and throughout the community.

On a personal level, I have had the privilege of witnessing Chief Reginald Freeman's steadfast support of the Oakland Latino Firefighters Association. He understood the important role that affinity organizations play in mentoring firefighters, preserving culture and heritage, strengthening recruitment efforts, and building intentional relationships

with the communities we serve. His support was genuine and unwavering. Whether promoting leadership development, encouraging community outreach, or recognizing the value organizations like ours bring to the fire service, Chief Reginald Freeman consistently demonstrated that empowering firefighters and embracing the strengths of every member creates a stronger department and better serves the public.

He values collaboration, respects differing perspectives, and makes decisions grounded in what is best for both the department and the public. These qualities have earned him the confidence and respect of those who have had the opportunity to serve alongside him and under his leadership.

The City of Minneapolis has an outstanding opportunity to welcome a proven fire service leader with extensive executive experience, unquestionable integrity, and a deep commitment to public safety. I am confident that Chief Reginald Freeman will lead the Minneapolis Fire Department with the same professionalism, vision, and dedication that distinguished his service in Oakland.

I respectfully urge the Minneapolis City Council to confirm Chief Reginald Freeman as Fire Chief. He possesses the leadership, experience, character, and vision necessary to guide the Minneapolis Fire Department into the future while serving the residents of Minneapolis with distinction.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this recommendation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gustavo Gonzalez', with a stylized, flowing script.

Gustavo Gonzalez
President
National Association of Hispanic Firefighters



FDNY

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT

The Honorable Members of the Minneapolis City Council,

I am writing to express my unwavering support for the appointment of Dr. Reginald D. Freeman as the Fire Chief of the Minneapolis Fire Department.

In the fire service, reputations are earned over decades through performance, character, and the respect of peers, not through titles alone. Dr. Freeman has consistently demonstrated these qualities throughout his career, earning the respect of his colleagues at every level. He has become a rare leader whose influence extends beyond the departments he has served, shaping conversations about the future of the fire service both nationally and internationally.

Our profession is facing new challenges that require more than technical competence. Fire chiefs must navigate complex operational risks, workforce expectations, political environments, and community partnerships while maintaining a steadfast commitment to protecting life and property. Dr. Freeman possesses the unique ability to strike this delicate balance.

What truly impresses me is his ability to think beyond immediate challenges while prioritizing the well-being of the firefighters riding the fire trucks. He knows that successful organizations are built on developing people, providing clarity of purpose, and fostering cultures where accountability and professionalism are the norm rather than the exception. These principles are not merely concepts he discusses; they are evident in the organizations he has led and the leaders he has mentored throughout his career.

Dr. Freeman has distinguished himself as a prominent voice in the fire service, recognized for his expertise in executive leadership, organizational development, and strategic transformation. His influence extends across various departments, from national boards to higher education, through his research and engagement with fire service leaders worldwide. Few chiefs have demonstrated the remarkable ability to seamlessly integrate municipal operations, academic scholarship, national policy, and international public safety initiatives with the same level of credibility.

Dr. Freeman's exceptional suitability for Minneapolis lies in his profound understanding that leadership begins with active listening. Strong organizations are not built through mandates but through the earned trust of their members. Throughout his career, Dr. Freeman has consistently demonstrated his remarkable ability to unite firefighters, labor representatives, elected officials, business leaders, and community members behind a shared vision. This rare and invaluable skill is increasingly crucial for any metropolitan fire department.



FDNY

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT

The fire service has always thrived under the leadership of individuals who challenge conventional thinking while honoring the traditions that define our profession. Dr. Freeman has consistently embodied this leadership throughout his career. He has never been content with maintaining the status quo when there is room for improvement. Whether it's enhancing organizational performance, strengthening firefighter development, embracing innovation, or improving community outcomes, Dr. Freeman has consistently elevated the organizations and individuals he leads.

Credibility is a cornerstone of effective leadership, and Dr. Freeman has earned it not only through his executive experience but also through his deep understanding of every facet of the fire service. He recognizes the immense responsibility that comes with command, the expectations placed upon firefighters, and the unwavering trust our communities place in us daily. This comprehensive perspective guides every decision he makes.

From my position as the leader of one of the world's largest and most demanding fire departments, I recognize leaders who elevate our profession. Dr. Freeman is undoubtedly one of them. He embodies the kind of principled and forward-thinking leadership that fortifies not only an organization but also the entire fire service.

The City of Minneapolis has the unique opportunity to appoint a leader whose influence will transcend department operations. Dr. Freeman's commitment to investing in firefighters, bolstering public confidence, nurturing future leaders, and positioning the Minneapolis Fire Department as a beacon of excellence will have a lasting impact.

I wholeheartedly trust Dr. Freeman and respectfully urge the Minneapolis City Council to confirm his appointment as Fire Chief. I am confident that he will serve the Firefighters of Minneapolis and the residents of your city with distinction, integrity, and honor.

Respectfully,

John M. Esposito

Chief of Department



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FIRE MARSHALS

July 12, 2026

Selection Committee City of Minneapolis

Dear Members of the Selection Committee,

It is my honor to provide my strongest recommendation for Dr. Reggie Freeman as your next Fire Chief for the City of Minneapolis.

Throughout his distinguished career, Dr. Freeman has consistently demonstrated the leadership, integrity, and vision necessary to lead a modern metropolitan fire department. He is recognized throughout the fire service as an innovative executive who understands that today's fire chief must be more than an emergency responder. He must be a strategic leader capable of strengthening emergency preparedness, advancing community risk reduction, developing future leaders, and building strong partnerships with elected officials, employees, labor organizations, and the communities they serve.

Dr. Freeman has earned a national reputation for embracing progressive public safety practices while maintaining an unwavering commitment to firefighter safety, operational excellence, and fiscal responsibility. His leadership style is collaborative, transparent, and focused on achieving measurable results. He has repeatedly demonstrated the ability to guide organizations through complex challenges while maintaining the trust and confidence of both internal personnel and external stakeholders.

One of Dr. Freeman's greatest strengths is his ability to see beyond today's challenges and prepare organizations for tomorrow's risks. Whether addressing emergency medical services, all-hazards preparedness, disaster response, workforce development, emerging technologies, or community engagement, he approaches each issue with thoughtful analysis and a commitment to continuous improvement.

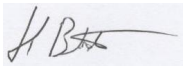
Equally important is his investment in people. Dr. Freeman understands that a department's greatest asset is its workforce. He is respected for mentoring future leaders, promoting professional development, fostering accountability, and creating a culture where personnel are empowered to succeed. His leadership builds organizations that are resilient, adaptable, and committed to excellence.

The City of Minneapolis deserves a Fire Chief who possesses operational credibility, executive leadership experience, strategic vision, and the ability to unite people around a common mission. Dr. Freeman embodies those qualities. His experience leading complex organizations, coupled with his dedication to public service and innovation, makes him exceptionally qualified to lead the Minneapolis Fire Department into the future.

I offer my highest recommendation without reservation. I am confident that Dr. Freeman will provide outstanding leadership, strengthen the department's relationship with the community, and continue advancing one of the nation's premier fire departments.

Thank you for your consideration of this exceptional leader. I wish Dr. Freeman and the City of Minneapolis every success throughout this important selection process.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Browning", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chief H. "Butch" Browning
Executive Director
National Association of State Fire Marshals



July 7, 2026
Minneapolis City Council
Minneapolis City Hall
350 S. 5th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Dear Members of the Minneapolis City Council,

I am writing to express my support for the confirmation of Dr. Reginald Freeman as the next Fire Chief of the Minneapolis Fire Department.

Throughout his distinguished career, Dr. Freeman has demonstrated the qualities that define exceptional fire service leadership: integrity, accountability, vision, and a steadfast commitment to serving both firefighters and the communities they protect. His leadership style is rooted in transparency and respect, creating an environment where personnel are empowered to perform at their highest level while remaining focused on the department's mission of protecting life and property.

Dr. Freeman has consistently demonstrated the ability to lead organizations through complex challenges while maintaining the trust of both his workforce and the public. He understands that modern fire service leadership extends beyond emergency response and includes strategic planning, organizational development, community engagement, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. His approach emphasizes listening, building consensus, and making thoughtful, data-informed decisions that strengthen both the department and the communities it serves.

Beyond his leadership within individual organizations, Dr. Freeman has made significant contributions to the fire service profession as a whole. His commitment to professional development, innovation, and mentoring the next generation of fire service leaders has had a lasting impact across the profession. He has consistently championed initiatives that improve operational excellence, firefighter safety, leadership development, and organizational effectiveness, helping advance the fire service beyond the boundaries of any single department.

Equally important is Dr. Freeman's ability to build meaningful relationships with community members, elected officials, labor representatives, and partner agencies. He recognizes that effective public safety depends on collaboration and trust, and he has demonstrated throughout his career that he can successfully bring diverse stakeholders together in pursuit of common goals.

The Minneapolis Fire Department deserves a leader who combines operational expertise with strategic vision, compassion, and commitment to excellence. Dr. Freeman embodies these qualities. His experience, character, and proven record of leadership make him exceptionally well-qualified to lead the department into the future.

Author, John C. Maxwell once said, “Anyone can steer the ship, but it takes a leader to chart the course.” This quote sums up my observations of Dr. Reginald “Reggie” Freeman who I consider to be a friend and professional colleague. I respectfully encourage the Minneapolis City Council to confirm Dr. Reginald Freeman as Fire Chief. I am confident he will serve the City of Minneapolis with distinction and continue to strengthen one of its most vital public safety institutions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,



Colin D. Burress
Fire Chief
Memphis Fire Department

Dr. Hezedeane A. Smith, DM, CFO, CEMSO, NRP, CPM, COSS, EFO-EMSO, FACPE

Chief Executive Officer | Global Emergency Services Consulting Group (GESCG)

President, National EMS Management Association (NEMSMA)

Chairperson, Black Chief Officers Committee (BCOC)

Fire Chief, Turks and Caicos Islands

July 7, 2026

RE: Letter of Reference: Dr. Reginald Freeman, CFO, FIFireE

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with both professional confidence and personal conviction that I offer this letter of reference on behalf of Dr. Reginald Freeman, CFO, FIFireE to the Minneapolis City Council. I have known Dr. Freeman for more than 20 years, a relationship rooted in shared work through academia, the Caribbean Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC), the National Fire Protection Agency, The Institute for Fire Engineers (US and UK), and extended across some of the most consequential arenas in public safety leadership. Over those two decades, I have observed him not simply as a colleague but as a peer whose breadth of service and depth of character are unmatched in this profession.

Dr. Freeman's operational record speaks for itself. His tenure as a metropolitan fire chief, including his leadership of the Oakland Fire Department in California and service with the Hartford Fire Department in Connecticut, placed him at the helm of two complex, high-demand urban systems. Both assignments required him to manage significant community risk, workforce challenge, and institutional pressure simultaneously. He did so with the steadiness of a seasoned executive and the situational awareness of a practitioner who never lost touch with the operational floor. Those experiences shaped a leader capable of making sound decisions under conditions that would challenge even the most prepared chief officer. Furthermore, as a faculty at multiple academic institutions, he has influenced the competencies of countless cross-disciplinary adult learners from the bachelor's to the doctoral level.

His international work has been equally distinguished. As Executive Director of Fire and EMS for a quasi-governmental agency supporting the NEOM development project in Saudi Arabia, Dr. Freeman took on a scope of responsibility that very few public safety professionals anywhere in the world have been asked to manage. His successful navigation of that environment reflects a global competency that is rare and valuable. Our work together across the English-speaking Caribbean has reinforced for me what his broader career already confirms: he brings rigor, generosity, and genuine commitment to every platform he occupies. As far back as the early 2000s, Dr. Freeman has engaged Caribbean senior and junior fire officers not as an outsider offering commentary, but as a practitioner mentoring, volunteering and developing leadership competencies.

Dr. Freeman has also contributed at the national level through engagement with the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) demonstrating his commitment to cross-disciplinary public safety collaboration that includes fire protection standards and emergency management. His willingness to operate at the intersection of fire, EMS, emergency management, planning and leadership reflects a systems-oriented perspective that is essential to 21st century emergency services leadership. Leaders of his caliber, who can engage credibly across professional boundaries while advancing interoperability, are a genuine asset.

Beyond the titles and the body of work, I know Dr. Freeman as a friend. That friendship has been tested and affirmed across geography, organizational pressures, and the many transitions that define a long career in public safety. He is a person of integrity, and I trust his judgment. I offer this reference with full confidence that the City of Minneapolis, will be fortunate to benefit from Dr. Freeman's leadership style, competencies and multi-disciplinary expertise.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Hezedeane A. Smith

Dr. Hezedeane A. Smith (Jul 7, 2026 07:22:03 EDT)

Dr. Hezedeane A. Smith, DM, CFO, CEMSO, NRP, CPM, COSS, EFO-EMSO, FACPE

Chief Executive Officer, Global Emergency Services Consulting Group (GESCG)

President, National EMS Management Association (NEMSMA)

Chairperson, Black Chief Officers Committee (BCOC)

Fire Chief, Turks and Caicos Islands (TCIFS)