



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Sean M. Ryan

Senator Sean Ryan Secures \$190,000 To Fund Cancer Prevention For Buffalo Firefighters

SEAN M. RYAN February 16, 2024

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State Grants Will Fund Purchase of Washers and Dryers Specifically Designed to Remove Carcinogens from Firefighting Gear

BUFFALO – Today, February 16, 2024, New York State Senator Sean Ryan was joined by representatives from the Buffalo Fire Department, Buffalo Professional Firefighters Local 282, and Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center to announce \$190,000 in state grants to pay for equipment that will help protect Buffalo firefighters from increased cancer risks by removing cancer-causing contaminants from their protective gear.

The grants will primarily fund the purchase and installation of heavy-duty washing machines specifically designed to remove carcinogens and other contaminants from protective gear worn by Buffalo firefighters, including four turnout extractors and two washing machines for additional equipment. Remaining funds will be used to purchase a dryer to properly dry the gear and storage racks for the laundered equipment. The equipment being funded by the grant will be installed at the Buffalo Fire Department Service Station in downtown Buffalo.

Firefighters are exposed to a wide range of carcinogens that have been linked to significantly higher incidence rates for several types of cancers. The contaminants that build up in their protective equipment lead to direct exposure to chemicals, heavy metals, and other cancer-causing agents. Studies from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health have found that firefighters face a 9% higher rate of cancer diagnoses and a 14% higher rate of cancer-related deaths than the general population of the United States.

As a result, Buffalo Professional Firefighters Local 282 has collaborated with the Buffalo Fire Department and Roswell Park to form a Cancer Prevention Committee. The mission of this Committee is to mitigate occupational exposures that lead to an increase in cancers among firefighters.

Senator Sean Ryan said, “Every day, Buffalo’s firefighters put their health and wellbeing on the line to protect their neighbors. One important way to show our gratitude for their service is to provide them with the support they need to make their jobs as safe as possible. This funding will help combat the high cancer rates that plague firefighters across the nation and protect the people who keep our community safe.”

Buffalo Fire Department Commissioner William Renaldo said, “Through our partnership with Roswell Park and Buffalo Professional Firefighters Local 282, we have consistently worked to identify actions we can take to protect Buffalo’s firefighters and first responders from increased risk of cancer. Adding these state-of-the-art extractors to our service station will make a big difference in ensuring the health and safety of our members.”

Chris Whelan, President of Buffalo Professional Firefighters Local 282, said, “Every firefighter knows this job comes with risks, but it’s incumbent on those of us in leadership positions to do everything possible to mitigate those risks. This grant will fund lifesaving measures recommended by the Cancer Prevention Committee, and Local 282 would like to thank

Senator Ryan for prioritizing Buffalo's first responders with this funding."

Mary Reid, PhD, MSPH, BSN, Chief of Cancer Screening and Survivorship at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, said, "Firefighters run into so much risk, so many unknowns, with every emergency they respond to. Extractors are a simple, proven way to minimize toxic exposures, significantly decreasing the risk that our firefighters will get cancer or suffer serious illness. We're proud to know that thanks to this collaborative effort our community is putting the evidence to work for our first responders by prioritizing better access to clean gear."