



NEW YORK STATE PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

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Joint Legislative Budget Hearing

State Fiscal Year 2025-26 Executive Budget on Public Protection

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Written Testimony of Samuel A. Fresina President, New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association (NYSPFFA)

Chairwoman Krueger, Chairman Pretlow and other members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on the 2025-26 New York State Executive Budget. My name is Sam Fresina, and I currently serve as the President of the New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association (NYSPFFA), I.A.F.F AFL-CIO. We are a not-for-profit association representing approximately 18,000 firefighters in 110 Locals in various cities, villages and towns across New York State.

NYSPFFA strongly supports Part SS of the Transportation, Economic Development and Environmental Conservation budget bill (S.3008/A.3008), which will ban the manufacture, sale and distribution of firefighting personal protective equipment containing intentionally added PFAS chemicals.

It is widely known that PFAS (perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are often referred to as “forever chemicals” due to their long-lasting carbon-fluorine bonds which make them difficult to degrade. According to the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), toxic PFAS enters the body through inhalation, absorption and ingestion, and have been linked to a variety of illnesses or health conditions, including thyroid, bladder, kidney and liver cancers, diabetes, and elevated cholesterol.

Further, the IAFF contends that because PFAS are bio accumulative and remain in the body for two to nine years following exposure, the dangers from repeated exposure, such as the work of fire fighters, make risks posed by the substance even greater.

The Federal government has been examining and studying PFAS. In 2023, a National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) study demonstrated that the textiles used in firefighting PPE often contain PFAS, which, according to the National Cancer Institute’s Division of Cancer Epidemiology & Genetics, are linked to an increased risk of cancer (particularly kidney and testicular).

We are pleased that New York State has been a leading voice in striving to eliminate PFAS.

In 2019 (Chapter 702) and 2020 (Chapter 88), NYSPFFA advocated in support of legislation, which has been signed into law, banning the manufacture, sale and distribution of PFAS-added foam in New York State. This law also requires that manufacturers and sellers of firefighting personal protective equipment (PPE) provide written notice to the purchaser if the firefighting PPE contains PFAS chemicals and the reasons as to why the PFAS chemicals are added to the equipment. The state also allows for the Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) to “give priority and preference to the purchase of firefighting PPE that does not contain PFAS chemicals.”

We know that these chemicals are in our turnout gear and according to the IAFF, recent studies have shown that all three layers of fire fighter turnout gear contain PFAS, which have been linked to cancer and other serious health effects.¹² These studies highlight the risks associated with the materials and finishes used in turnout gear even before it is exposed to its first fire.

A January 2024 NIST study further noted that firefighting PPE “tend to release more PFAS when they are subject to wear and tear.” Therefore, fire fighters using older and heavily used turnout gear are more susceptible to increased exposure to PFAS. Increased delays in transitioning to PFAS-free firefighting PPE only exacerbates the potential risk of illness and danger to our members.

While the IAFF has issued guidance and precautionary items to its membership in an effort to reduce exposure to PFAS contamination in firefighting PPE, the only assured way to protect our fire fighters from the dangers of PFAS is through the removal of these harmful substances from our gear.

Last year, Massachusetts enacted legislation phasing out firefighting PPE containing PFAS, while Connecticut has phased out PFAS in a variety of applications. Major North American cities such as San Francisco, CA and Vancouver, BC have voluntarily began phasing out fire fighter gear containing PFAS as well.

The simple fact is this. We do not believe that we should be in a fire situation where the equipment that is designed to protect us could potentially cause us harm. New York State can and should be the next jurisdiction to take these necessary steps to protect its fire fighters. NYSPFFA and our members look forward to partnering with the Governor and legislature in phasing out firefighting PPE containing PFAS in 2025.

Thank you.

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¹ Muensterman DJ, Titaley IA, Peaslee GF, Minc LD, Cahuas L, Rodowa AE, Horiuchi Y, Yamane S, Fouquet TNJ, Kissel JC, Carignan CC, Field JA. Disposition of Fluorine on New Firefighter Turnout Gear. *Environ Sci Technol.* 2022 Jan 18;56(2):974-983

² Peaslee, G. F.; Wilkinson, J. T.; McGuinness, S. R.; Tighe, M.; Caterisano, N.; Lee, S.; Gonzales, A.; Roddy, M.; Mills, S.; Mitchell, K. Another Pathway for Firefighter Exposure to Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances: Firefighter Textiles. *Environ. Sci. Technol. Lett.* 2020, 7, 594–599