

## Public Safety and Security Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-7120

AN ACT CONCERNING FIREFIGHTER TURNOUT GEAR, A FIREFIGHTER  
CANCER SCREENING PILOT PROGRAM AND GRANTS FOR THE REMOVAL  
**Title:** OF PFAS FROM FIRE APPARATUS.

**Vote Date:** 3/18/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations

**PH Date:** 3/4/2025

**File No.:**

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

### SPONSORS OF BILL:

[Sen. John A. Kissel, 7th Dist.](#)

[Rep. Carol Hall, 59th Dist.](#)

[Rep. Michael D. Quinn, 82nd Dist.](#)

[Rep. Amy Morrin Bello, 28th Dist.](#)

[Rep. Jill Barry, 31st Dist.](#)

[Rep. Patrick S. Boyd, 50th Dist.](#)

### REASONS FOR BILL:

Firefighters are exposed to a variety of harmful substances and chemicals on the job which put them at an increased rate for certain types of cancers. The establishment of a task force, as proposed in this bill, will educate fire departments and municipalities as to the best practices to tackle this issue. Furthermore, this bill provides for improved screening and treatment programs. These provisions will allow for an increased ability to detect and treat cancer in firefighters before the disease reaches an extreme level. Finally, this bill provides valuable reimbursement programs for departments and municipalities to help offset the financial cost of removing harmful chemicals, known as PFAs, from firefighter's gear.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Jeffrey Bond, Burlington Vol. Fire Department, Supports:](#)

Jeffrey Bond emphasizes the vital role that improved screening and data collection plays in maintaining the health and longevity of firefighters. Bond laments that data on firefighter cancer rates is not robust and much more data needs to be collected. Moreover, he highlights the necessity of universal, routine screening for firefighters, noting that it is impossible to predict when an emergency call is placed that would put a firefighter at risk for developing these cancers.

**John Carew, Legislative Consultant, CT State Firefighter Association, Supports:**

John Carew is testifying in support of the proposed legislation on behalf of the Connecticut State Firefighters Association (CSFA). CSFA is quite supportive of the bill, but it raises a few concerns. CSFA highlights the excessive cost burden that this legislation would impose on local tax payers to purchase new, PFA free gear. CSFA is also concerned about the availability and quality of the new PFA gear. CSFA expresses its desire to transition to PFA free gear as soon as possible, but want to ensure this gear is safe and accessible.

**Sen. John Kissel, State Senator, 7<sup>th</sup> District, Supports:**

Sen. Kissel is testifying in strong support of the proposed legislation, specifically emphasizing Sections 3 and 4 as being particularly beneficial. He remarks that these concepts were incorporated from similar legislation he proposed, highlighting that he had drafted that bill in consultation with the Thompsonville Fire Chief. Sen. Kissel notes that there is widespread understanding about the dangers of PFAs and their effects on the health of firefighters – these substances can increase firefighters risks of developing certain types of cancers. It is for this reason he supports the aforementioned Sections – these Sections would ensure the critical funding needed to remove these harmful substances remain within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) to ensure these programs maintain a reliable source of capital.

**Mike Muszynski, Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, Supports:**

The Connecticut Council of Municipalities (CCM) supports the idea behind the bill, but has a couple of suggestions. For Section I, regarding the removal of PFAs from gear, CCM supports the effort but advocates for more time, clarify and, funding in regard to the program. CCM notes the importance of the pilot program, established in Section 2, but emphasizes that the program must maintain "the health and data privacy of firefighters."

**David Perrelli, Supports:**

David Perrelli recounts his personal experience with cancer, to express his support for the proposed legislation. He notes that by the time this cancer was discovered the disease had progressed to the point where the treatment process was long and arduous. Perrelli shares this story to emphasize how important routines screenings and early detection is for firefighters.

**Rep. John Piscopo, State Representative, 76<sup>th</sup> District, Supports:**

Representative Piscopo acknowledges the alarming rate at which firefighters are being diagnosed with cancer. What was once thought as a coincidence is now being treated as a side-effect of the profession. Rep. Piscopo points out that cancer treatment is more cost effective when the disease is identified early. For this reason, he supports the provisions in this bill that provide benefits like consistent cancer screenings. These programs are intended to save money, and lives. Rep. Piscopo notes the hard work of the Burlington Fire Department in setting up this program – he wants to see this momentum continue.

**Earl Provencher, Fire Chief, North Thompsonville Fire District, Supports:**

Earl Provencher is in general support of this bill, but highlights reimbursement for the removal of PFAs in particular as a primary concern. Currently, fire departments can only be reimbursed for the removal of PFAs if they took these steps after July 1, 2023. He applauds the effort to extend the existing reimbursement programs to those fire departments which took the initiative to remove PFAs prior to this date. Provencher does not want to penalize departments that proactively took initiatives to remove PFAs prior to July 2023.

**Joseph Speich, Assistant Chief, Avon Volunteer Fire Department, Supports:**

Joseph Speich highlights both the reimbursement program for removal of PFAs and the cancer prevention programs as being particularly positive aspects of this legislation. He emphasizes how early detection of cancer is critical in effectively treating the disease and saving firefighters lives. He also notes the financial burden on municipalities to remove PFAs from their equipment – the reimbursement program would go a long way in easing this onerous responsibility.

**Michael Thurz, Chief, Joint Council of Fire Service Connecticut, Supports:**

Michael Thurz is testifying in support of the proposed legislation on behalf of the Joint Council of Fire Service. While supportive, the Joint Council offers a few suggestions on specific language contained in the bill. Line 5 of the legislation indicates that a model should be developed – the Joint Council notes that this model has already been established and the authority to make future changes should be vested in "the State Fire Administrator and the Commission of Fire Prevention and Control." The Council takes issue with Line 17, arguing that the mandate to remove PFAs is unfunded and difficult to implement in the short period of time provided. Furthermore, the Council questions why "the one-year pilot program... rest[s] with the State Fire Marshal, and not the State Fire Administrator". Finally, the Council supports reimbursements for fire departments which removed PFAs prior to July 1, 2023.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None Expressed

**Reported by: Derrick Arnold**

**Date: 3/31/25**