



## New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association, Inc.

174 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12210

Phone: 518-436-8827 • 1-800-238-8827 • Fax: 518-436-8830

E Mail: [profire@nysppfa.org](mailto:profire@nysppfa.org)

[www.nysppfa.org](http://www.nysppfa.org)

April 26, 2021

**SAMUEL A. FRESINA**  
President

**JAMES J. MCGOWAN**  
Secretary-Treasurer

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### CHAPLAIN

**REV. JOHN TALLMAN**  
40 Collins Place  
Albany, NY 12208

RE: AN ACT to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to the regulation of chemicals in upholstered furniture, mattresses and electronic enclosures

S.4630-A (Kaminsky)

### MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

The New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association (NYSPPFA), I.A.F.F. AFL-CIO, a not-for-profit association representing 18,000 fire fighters in 107 Locals in various cities, villages, and towns across New York State, strongly supports enactment of this legislation, which will phase out the use of certain flame retardant chemicals in New York State.

Commencing on December 31, 2023, the bill restricts the sale of upholstered furniture or mattresses that contain intentionally added "halogenated, organophosphorus, organonitrogen, or nanoscale chemical flame retardants." Additionally, beginning on January 1, 2024, the bill bars the sale of certain electronic display products that include an intentionally added organohalogen flame retardant chemical in the enclosure or stand of the display.

Recent studies have demonstrated that fire fighters have higher incidents of cancer compared to other occupational illnesses and such illnesses are directly related to the job of firefighting and the increased use of chemicals in household products and other applications.

In 2015, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) completed a five-year study of almost 30,000 fire fighters from the Chicago, Philadelphia, and San Francisco Fire Departments exploring links between firefighting and cancer. The study found:

- The fire fighters studied showed higher rates of certain types of cancer than the general U.S. population.
- The fire fighters studied had a greater number of cancer diagnoses and cancer-related deaths compared to U.S. cancer rates.
- There were about twice as many fire fighters with malignant mesothelioma, a rare type of cancer caused by exposure to asbestos.
- The chance of lung cancer diagnosis or death increased with amount of time spent at fires.
- The chance of leukemia death increased with the number of fire runs.





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When flame retardants applied to upholstered furniture and other products burn, they create toxic chemicals that have been scientifically linked to occupational cancers. These toxins can be absorbed through firefighting turnout gear and skin and often return with that fire fighter to their respective firehouse.

A 2010 study by the Marine Environmental Research Institute, in Blue Hill, Maine, concluded that: "Flame retardant chemicals can pose a potentially greater hazard than the risk from the fires they are supposed to prevent. Reducing the use of toxic and untested halogenated flame retardants will protect human and animal health and the global environment."

The fight against the use of flame retardants is an issue that NYSPFFA has been working on in conjunction with the International Association of Fire Fighters ("IAFF") for many years. In 2014, the IAFF passed a resolution supporting the Federal and state ban of flame retardant chemicals used in household furniture and other items.

According to Racquel Segall, an occupational health specialist for firefighters, "The IAFF supports banning the use of organohalogen flame retardants because when burned they are all carcinogens that contribute to cancer and have additional negative effects on the health of our members. Given the increasing body of evidence that indicates the persistence, bio-accumulation and potential health concerns of these fire retardants, we believe the health risks associated with the use of these chemicals is greater than the fire risk without using these chemicals."

Along with the IAFF, NYSPFFA believes there is a need for modern fire safety that is toxic free and does not expose our members to the carcinogens that are contributing to the high rates of cancers in the fire service. Our organizations remain committed to policies that remove toxic chemicals from the already dangerous and hazardous firefighting environments that our members encounter every day.

For the aforementioned reasons, NYSPFFA strongly supports the enactment of this legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Samuel A. Fresina, President

New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association

