



To: Senate Committee on Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

From: Chief Brian Stewart
Clackamas Fire District
Oregon Fire Chiefs Association

Chief Ben Stange
Polk County Fire District No. 1
SDAO Fire Districts

Date: March 11, 2025

Re: HCR2 – Support for Prioritizing Firefighter Health and Urgently Addressing Cancer-Causing Chemicals in Protective Gear.

Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the committee,

The Oregon Fire Chiefs Association and the Special Districts of Oregon Fire Section are submitting testimony in support of HCR 2. This resolution recognizes the risks firefighters and fire investigators face daily and the urgent need to address the presence of harmful chemicals in firefighting equipment.

For generations, Oregon’s firefighters have selflessly answered the call to serve and protect our communities. In doing so, they have been exposed to dangerous conditions that extend beyond the immediate threats of fire and smoke. The World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer recently classified firefighting as a Group 1 carcinogen - placing our profession in the same category as tobacco smoke. This designation underscores what fire service professionals have long known: firefighting carries an elevated risk of occupational cancer.

Scientific research has confirmed that firefighters are regularly exposed to carcinogens, both from combustion byproducts and from the very gear designed to protect them. One of the most concerning elements of this exposure is perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), which are widely used in manufacturing personal protective equipment (PPE). Because PFAS chemicals do not break down easily they have been used in firefighter protective gear and firefighting foam for many years. PFAS chemicals are linked to a variety of cancers and other serious health issues. An extensive database of PFAS chemicals, health outcomes, and research is available at PFAStoxdatabase.org. While it encompasses nearly all studies, you may search for “firefighter” to find studies specific to firefighters.

HCR 2 sends an important message and builds on the legislature's longstanding commitment to firefighter health by acknowledging the latest scientific findings and calling for tangible measures to protect firefighters from unnecessary exposure to known carcinogens.

We hope the following point can be clarified for the record when HCR reaches the House Floor for a vote:

- Emphasize the need for including appropriate timelines in any legislation addressing the impacts of HCR 2 to ensure that suitable non-PFAS firefighting protective gear is **readily** available.

We urge this legislature to pass HCR 2, thereby recognizing that our firefighters are being harmed by their firefighting personal protective gear and that it must be replaced quickly. Further, we encourage this legislative assembly, and the one which will enact the prescribed legislation, to provide state funding to offset the cost of replacing hazardous gear ahead of regular replacement cycles and the potential higher cost of non-PFAS gear. Doing so would help meet HCR-2's resolution of "ensuring that personal protective gear containing PFAS gear is quickly replaced throughout this state."

Thank you for your commitment to the well-being of Oregon's fire service professionals.

Respectfully Submitted,



Chief Ben Stange
Polk County Fire District No. 1



Chief Brian Stewart
Clackamas Fire District