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S. 4844

To drive innovation in developing next-generation protection for firefighters by accelerating the development of PFAS-free turnout gear, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 18, 2026

Mr. HEINRICH (for himself, Mr. WELCH, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. CURTIS, Mr. BENNET, Mr. WYDEN, Ms. ALSOBROOKS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. SLOTKIN, Mr. GALLEGO, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, and Mr. MARKEY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To drive innovation in developing next-generation protection for firefighters by accelerating the development of PFAS-free turnout gear, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Protecting Firefighters
5 and Advancing State-of-the-Art Alternatives Act” or the
6 “PFAS Alternatives Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. PREVENTING OCCUPATIONAL ILLNESS AND INJURY**
2 **BY EXPANDING THE AVAILABILITY OF NEXT-**
3 **GENERATION TURNOUT GEAR.**

4 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

5 (1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
6 ty” means a nonprofit organization, institution of
7 higher education, national fire service organization,
8 or national fire safety organization, as determined
9 by the Secretary, with experience in not fewer than
10 3 of the following:

11 (A) Conducting research on issues related
12 to cancer and other occupational illnesses
13 among firefighters.

14 (B) Educating firefighters and other users
15 of turnout gear on safe use, cleaning, and de-
16 contamination of turnout gear.

17 (C) Educating firefighters on matters re-
18 lated to physical health, safety, and wellness.

19 (D) Experience collaborating with other
20 national nonprofit organizations to support re-
21 search on firefighter safety and health.

22 (E) Demonstrated ability to collaborate
23 with researchers on matters related to fire-
24 fighter health and safety.

1 (F) Representing membership comprised of
2 structural, wildfire, and aircraft firefighters and
3 supervisors.

4 (2) MOISTURE BARRIER MATERIALS.—The term
5 “moisture barrier material” means the component of
6 turnout gear that principally prevents the transfer of
7 hazardous liquids, including hot liquids, fireground
8 chemicals, and infectious fluids, and contributes to
9 the overall thermal insulation of the firefighter with-
10 out imposing undue burdens or otherwise compro-
11 mising the performance of turnout gear.

12 (3) PFAS.—The term “PFAS” means per- and
13 polyfluoroalkyl substances that contain at least one
14 fully fluorinated carbon atom or any other substance
15 the Secretary determines appropriate.

16 (4) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
17 the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

18 (5) TURNOUT GEAR.—The term “turnout gear”
19 means protective clothing worn as a main source of
20 protection for firefighters and emergency medical
21 services personnel during firefighting and post-fire
22 operations to minimize exposure to hazards that
23 cause serious injuries and illnesses that may result
24 from contact with thermal, physical, chemical, bio-
25 logical, or other workplace hazards. Turnout gear—

(A) includes protective clothing designed to protect firefighters performing structural firefighting, proximity firefighting, wildland firefighting, and urban interface firefighting; and

(B) may also include other personal protective equipment referred to in section 33(c)(3)(I)(i) of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. 2229(c)(3)(I)(i)).

(b) RESEARCH PROGRAMS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the availability of appropriations, not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, in consultation with the heads of other Federal agencies as appropriate, shall establish a program to award grants to eligible entities to support research, development, and testing of next-generation turnout gear and associated materials.

(2) REQUIREMENTS.—

(A) PFAS-FREE COMPONENTS.—Grants awarded under this subsection shall support the research, development, and testing of materials to design and produce PFAS-free turnout gear.

1 (B) PARTNERSHIP.—The Secretary shall
2 require that applications for grants under this
3 subsection include a description of how the eli-
4 gible entity will partner with organizations in,
5 and relevant to, the firefighting industry, in-
6 cluding organizations that directly represent
7 members who serve in nonmanagerial fire-
8 fighting roles, and how such partnership will
9 help move the results of research, development,
10 and testing described in subparagraph (A) into
11 practice, including guidance and training for
12 first responders and others who regularly use
13 turnout gear.

14 (3) CONSIDERATIONS.—In making awards
15 under this subsection, the Secretary may consider
16 the extent to which the activities proposed support
17 the research, development, and testing described in
18 subparagraph (A) that is likely to prevent occupa-
19 tional illness and injury for firefighters, including in-
20 novations that provide the following:

21 (A) Enhanced protection against primary
22 and secondary exposure to particulates and by-
23 products of combustion.

24 (B) Reduced maintenance that includes
25 contamination resistance and greater ease of

1 cleaning or visible warning indicators to alert
2 firefighters to hazardous exposures or the need
3 for decontamination.

4 (C) Consideration of body composition in
5 development of prototypes and other products.

6 (4) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

7 There are authorized to be appropriated
8 \$25,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2027 through
9 fiscal year 2031 to carry out this subsection.

10 (c) TRAINING PROGRAMS.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the availability of
12 appropriations, the Secretary, beginning in fiscal
13 year 2028, shall award grants to, or enter into con-
14 tracts or cooperative agreements with, eligible enti-
15 ties, as determined by the Secretary, to develop and
16 disseminate guidance and training for firefighters
17 and other first responders on best practices for re-
18 ducing potentially harmful exposures by safely wear-
19 ing, decontaminating, and caring for turnout gear
20 developed in accordance with subsection (b).

21 (2) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

22 There are authorized to be appropriated \$2,000,000
23 for each of fiscal years 2028 through fiscal year
24 2032 to carry out this subsection.

1 (d) REPORT.—Not later than two years after the date
2 of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit
3 to Congress a report describing the progress made in
4 achieving the goals under subsections (b) and (c).

