



Fire Fighting Foam Coalition

April 15, 2021

Subject: Testimony to Vermont House Committee on Human Services on Senate Bill 20

Honorable Chair Pugh and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mitch Hubert. Thank you for the opportunity to address your committee today.

I hold degrees in both Biology and Chemistry and have been working in the firefighting foam industry for more than 40 years as a formulation chemist and fire fighter.

I am here today representing the Fire Fighting Foam Coalition (FFFC) to urge you to reconsider Senate Bill 20. Our coalition is made up of foam manufacturers from throughout the world who fully support efforts to reduce the use of PFAS foams and are working feverishly to develop and improve non-fluorinated alternatives. All of the foam manufacturers that are members of FFFC make fluorine-free foams and fully support a timely transition to these products wherever possible.

Unfortunately, there are still fire scenarios and industry segments where the current technology utilized in fluorine-free foams falls short of providing the type of performance that can assure that large catastrophic fires can be successfully fought and extinguished, and which provide a measure of safety for firefighters and other first responders. As such the proposed legislation could hamper and possibly prevent firefighting efforts in these high hazard applications.

Sadly, we are faced with legacy issues of fluorinated surfactants that were released to the environment from firefighting foams largely through testing and fire training, much of which was mandated through laws and standards. What is important at this juncture is to minimize any additional discharges. Banning the use of fluorinated foams for testing and training can largely accomplish this goal.

While we continue to make advances in fluorine-free foam technology, we are still not at the point where those products can be considered as drop-in replacements. This is substantiated by a recent study conducted by the National Fire Protection Association Research Foundation in a rather extensive testing program on the effectiveness of fluorine-free foams. The conclusion of

that report, which is published and can be made available, is that there is more work to do with these products in some fire scenarios.

The proposed legislation would require most foam users in the state to have transitioned to fluorine-free foams by July of next year, which we consider to be extremely challenging. Recently proposed foam regulations in the European Union and New Zealand provide for a 5-year transition period.

We urge you to reconsider this bill and allow the continued use and sale of fluorinated firefighting foams for areas where we simply do not have drop-in replacements. These would include refineries, chemical facilities, bulk fuel loading terminals and some fixed fire suppression systems. This could be accomplished by providing specific exemptions as in the Washington State and Colorado laws, or through a system where users who do not currently have adequate alternatives work with state regulators to allow for the continued use of fluorinated foams. This is the approach taken in the proposed Connecticut and Illinois legislation.

As manufacturers we defer to our customers on these issues whenever possible, so we would support in principal the foam amendments outlined yesterday by the Associated Industries of Vermont.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitch Hubert
Technical Director
Fire Fighting Foam Coalition (FFFC)