

# Talking Points for State Legislative Hearings on PFAS-Free Turnout Gear

## 1. The NC State Study Should Not Be Used to Justify Delay

- The NC State study, led by Dr. Bryan Ormond, only simulated 1–3 years of gear use, while most proposed legislation gives manufacturers until 2027—far more time than the study considered.
- This study should be viewed as a starting point for continued research, not a final determination on the safety or efficacy of PFAS-free alternatives.
- Key limitations in the study include:
  - Small sample sizes,
  - Single-point flame exposure testing, and
  - No post-heat performance assessments.

## 2. Trade-Offs Are Normal—Cancer Is Not

- Every major PPE innovation has come with trade-offs—SCBAs, particulate-blocking hoods, TICs—but we moved forward because the health and safety benefits outweighed the challenges.
- PFAS exposure is a documented cancer risk for firefighters. We must stop asking firefighters to choose between performance and long-term health.
- Our safety gear must protect us from fire and disease—not trade one for the other.

## 3. Alternatives Exist—Viability Should Be Driving Innovation

- Dr. Ormond claims there are "no direct replacements," but that doesn't mean alternatives don't exist—it means the gear may perform differently, not poorly.
- The IAFF supports ongoing research, but innovation happens when legislation and market pressure work together—just as they did for other life-saving tools in the fire service.
- We can't expect manufacturers to move without a push. Deadlines create solutions.

## 4. Firefighters Are Ready to Adapt—We Always Have

- The fire service has a proven history of adapting to new technologies and standards. This transition is no different.
- The IAFF agrees with Ormond on one key point: training is essential.
- We support updated NFPA standards, clear guidance, and funding for departments to make the switch safely and confidently.

## 5. The Chemical Industry Should Not Dictate Firefighter Safety

- It is deeply troubling that opposition to PFAS-free legislation is being led by chemical manufacturers and the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM)—groups with a clear financial interest in the continued use of toxic materials.
- For decades, the chemical industry has misled the public—and firefighters—about the dangers of PFAS. Internal documents show companies knew as early as the 1960s about the persistence and toxicity of these "forever chemicals" but chose to conceal the risks

rather than protect public health. Firefighters are now bearing the cost of that deception with increased cancer rates and contaminated gear.

- Dr. Ormond's background, while academically impressive, is rooted in textile engineering, not in occupational health or real-world fireground experience. His work, and many of the studies now being cited to slow legislation, were developed in close partnership with the gear manufacturing industry, raising significant concerns about objectivity and bias.
- Firefighter health policy should never be shaped by those who profit from toxic products. It must be guided by independent science, labor leadership, and the lived experience of firefighters who wear this gear on the job every day. We've been lied to once—we won't let it happen again.