



**Testimony of  
Michael R. Scott, President  
Professional Fire Fighters of Maine**

**LD 222 An Act to Establish a Take-back and Disposal Program for Firefighting and Fire-suppressing Foam to Which Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Have Been Added**

Chairs Tepler and Doudera and distinguished members on the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, good morning and thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee today in support of LD 222, **An Act to Establish a Take-back and Disposal Program for Firefighting and Fire-suppressing Foam to Which Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Have Been Added.**

My name is Michael Scott, and I am the President of the Professional Fire Fighters of Maine. I am here today representing the views of our Executive Board and over 1,200 Professional Firefighters, Paramedics, EMTs & Dispatchers. PFFMaine has been actively involved in improving the health & safety of first responders for more than 75 years. This is a critical activity for a workforce in which fatalities and early retirement due to work-related disease occur with unfortunate and unnecessary regularity.

I am testifying on behalf of the Professional Fire Fighters of Maine to express our strong support for LD 222, a crucial piece of legislation that aims to enhance the health and safety of our brave firefighters and the citizens we serve throughout Maine. As first responders, fire fighters face a unique set of challenges and hazards in the line of duty. The risks are not limited to responding to fires; they extend to exposure to toxic materials, strenuous physical demands, and the psychological toll of emergency response. Worse yet, we even face occupational toxic exposures during our daily non-emergency routine work, as diesel exhaust, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, flame retardants and the toxins material to this bill - PFAS (Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances) - pervades and contaminates our stations and apparatus which then intoxicates and sickens our bodies. Protecting the health of our fire fighters means ensuring they have the necessary resources, training, support, and infrastructure to safeguard their health and safety while serving our communities.

**Protecting Maine's Firefighters and Citizens Through Proposed Legislation and the Take-Back and Disposal Program for PFAS-Containing Firefighting Foam:** As the State of Maine continues to confront the challenges posed by PFAS, the introduction of the proposed legislation to establish a take-back and disposal program for firefighting and fire-suppressing foam concentrates containing PFAS is a critical step in protecting both our fire fighters and the citizens they serve. Given the unique hazards faced by fire fighters associated with the chemicals they use, this legislation will not only help to mitigate risks to their health and safety but also contribute to the larger effort of safeguarding public wellbeing in our communities.

PFAS are a group of human-made substances that have been used in various industrial applications, including firefighting foams and are often referred to as "forever chemicals". These chemicals are persistent in the environment, bioaccumulate in the body, and can lead to serious health concerns, including cancer, immune system suppression, organ damage, endocrine (hormonal) disruption, metabolic disorders and cardiovascular illnesses. Moreover, PFAS express transplacental exposure and is teratogenic, meaning it causes birth defects to the unborn. And after birth, the risks to our most fragile population, our babies, do not stop. PFAS is found in maternal milk and gives rise to neurological developmental disabilities and decreased response to life-saving vaccinations. For fire fighters, exposure to PFAS through contaminated firefighting foam poses a significant risk as they work to protect life and property. The risks are exacerbated when this foam is used in emergency situations and training, often leading to unintended releases into the environment, including soil, air, as well as surface and ground water and wells serving as sources of drinking water for all Maine residents.

The proposed legislation, as articulated in 38 MRSA §424-C, sub-§5-A, mandates the development of a structured take-back and disposal program for PFAS-containing firefighting foam. This initiative addresses a critical gap in current waste management practices, ensuring that harmful substances do not linger in fire departments or communities, where they could pose a continuous threat to health and safety.

### **Key Components of the Proposed Program**

- 1. Safe Collection and Disposal:** The program emphasizes the safe and contained disposal of PFAS firefighting foam. By allowing individuals and fire departments to voluntarily request the collection of existing foam stocks, this legislation actively encourages proactive measures. Fire fighters will feel supported in their commitment to environmental health, knowing they can dispose of known hazardous materials without complicating their operations or compromising community safety, while making sure any future destruction technologies do not put additional toxic burdens on already impacted communities. The emphasis on contained disposal mitigates the risk of accidental release into the environment, helping to protect local ecosystems and groundwater supplies, which ultimately protects all Mainers.
- 2. Collaborative Approach:** The directive for the program to be created in consultation with the Department of Public Safety and the Office of the State Fire Marshal underlines a collaborative approach to developing effective procedures. This coordination ensures that the program reflects the needs and realities of firefighters and the communities they serve.

while adhering to best practices and regulatory standards. By working with experts, the program will be tailored to provide comprehensive support for those dealing with PFAS-containing materials.

3. **Implementation Timeline:** The establishment of a clear timeline, aiming for implementation by July 1, 2027, allows for thoughtful planning and execution of this critical program. This period also enables fire departments across Maine to prepare for the transition, training personnel and developing the necessary logistics for effective participation. Additional time should not be needed, as entire countries like Sweden and Australia have already proven. These nations have shown that PFAS-free firefighting foams are effective and serve as much safer alternatives to PFAS-containing foams.
4. **Third-Party Involvement:** The potential for the department to contract with a third-party entity to administer the program injects additional expertise and resources into the process. This partnership approach not only enhances the efficacy of the program but also ensures that collection and disposal processes are conducted safely and in alignment with environmental regulations. Engaging a qualified third party can also streamline operations, making it easier for firefighters and departments to navigate the disposal of these hazardous materials.

## **Protecting Firefighters**

1. **Health and Safety:** By facilitating the safe disposal of PFAS-laden foams, this program directly contributes to the health and safety of our fire fighters. Exposure to PFAS has been linked to numerous health complications, particularly among those working in high-risk occupational settings like firefighting. Removing PFAS-containing materials from the equation diminishes exposure, thereby promoting long-term health benefits for fire fighters.
2. **Equipment and Operational Safety:** The presence of PFAS in firefighting foam raises concerns about equipment, fire apparatus and fire houses' contamination, which in turn translates into compromised environmental safety. Fire fighters depend on personal protective equipment and specialized equipment to perform their duties and ensure that such equipment is free from toxic chemicals will enhance operational safety and effectiveness. The proposed program will help maintain the integrity of firefighting equipment and facilities, reducing the risk of potentially hazardous situations on the job.

## **Protecting Citizens**

1. **Environmental Protection:** The proposed legislation not only safeguards the health of fire fighters but also extends its protective measures to all citizens. By establishing a take-back program, the state can curtail the environmental risks associated with PFAS contamination, preserving the quality of water sources, soil, and air. This is essential for maintaining public health, particularly in communities that may be directly affected by contaminant runoff or exposure.

2. **Community Confidence:** Implementing a proactive take-back program will also help restore and bolster public trust in local fire departments. When communities see their firefighters engaging in responsible disposal practices for hazardous materials, it reinforces the commitment to public safety and environmental responsibility. This transparency is vital in fostering a collaborative relationship between firefighters and the communities they serve, ultimately enhancing community resilience during emergencies.
3. **Prevention of Future Contamination:** By removing existing PFAS-containing foam from circulation, this program aims to prevent further contamination of people and local environments. This is particularly critical as PFAS have been detected in various water sources in Maine. By curbing the use and presence of these chemicals, the proposed initiative contributes to the overall goal of creating safer and healthier communities for all Maine residents.

In conclusion, the establishment of a take-back and disposal program for PFAS-containing firefighting foam, as outlined in the proposed legislation, represents a significant commitment to the protection of Maine's fire fighters and citizens alike. By eliminating the risks posed by these dangerous chemicals, ensuring the health and safety of our brave first responders, and safeguarding the overall environment, this initiative stands as a testament to Maine's dedication to public health and community resilience. The collaborative, structured approach outlined in the bill ensures that the needs of our firefighters are met while also prioritizing the safety and well-being of the public. It is imperative that we move forward with this legislation, recognizing it as a crucial step towards a healthier and safer Maine for all.

Please vote in favor of LD 222 so that we can establish a take-back and disposal program for PFAS-containing firefighting foam that will represent your commitment to the protection of Maine's firefighters and citizens alike.

Members of the Committee, in addition to the forgoing, the Professional Fire Fighters of Maine are also in full support of the passage of both LD 400 (An Act to Resolve, Directing the Department of Public Safety, Office of the State Fire Marshal to Compile a Statewide Inventory of Aqueous Film-forming Foam Concentrate) and LD 407 (An Act to Prohibit the Use of Aqueous Film-forming Foam (AFFF) at the Former Brunswick Naval Air Station) that is also before your committee today. Our support for both LD 400 and LD 407 is outlined in Attachment (1) of this written testimony for your review and consideration. We also urge your support of both LD 400 and LD 407.

Respectfully Submitted on this day, Monday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Michael Scott, President  
Professional Fire Fighters of Maine

## **ATTACHMENT (1)**

### **Professional Fire Fighters of Maine**

#### **Testimony in Support of**

#### **LD 400 Resolve, Directing the Department of Public Safety, Office of the State Fire Marshal to Compile a Statewide Inventory of Aqueous Film-forming Foam Concentrate.**

We, the Professional Fire Fighters of Maine, are here today to express our unequivocal support for LD 400, which resolves to direct the Department of Public Safety, Office of the State Fire Marshal to compile a statewide inventory of Aqueous Film-forming Foam (AFFF) concentrate. This critical initiative is essential for protecting both public safety and our environmental resources.

- 1. The Urgent Need for Awareness:** In the wake of the alarming revelations regarding the toxic nature of AFFF, particularly highlighted by the situation at the former Brunswick Naval Air Station, it has never been more important for us to have a clear understanding of where AFFF is stored across the state. Our duty as fire fighters extends beyond just responding to emergencies; it includes proactively safeguarding our communities from potential environmental hazards.
- 2. Estimating the Scope of the Issue:** It is estimated that there are around 50,000 gallons of AFFF stored at various facilities throughout Maine. This significant quantity raises serious concerns about potential contaminations and the risks associated with improper storage or accidental releases. Knowing the precise locations of this foam is imperative for effective emergency response planning and environmental protection efforts. To underscore the significance of this matter, the EPA regulates PFAS in drinking water in concentrations of parts per trillion -with a 't'- and actually has gone on record stating that the safe level of PFAS in drinking water should be zero.
- 3. The Gaps in Current Reporting:** Unfortunately, our state currently lacks an accurate inventory of AFFF storage. During the 2019 PFAS Task Force meetings, efforts to gather comprehensive reporting on AFFF were hindered. The absence of any mandatory requirement for facilities to disclose their foam usage prevented us from obtaining essential information that could have informed our safety protocols and remediation strategies.
- 4. The Importance of LD 400:** LD 400 addresses these critical issues by mandating the state fire marshal's office to compile an inventory encompassing both public and private entities. This legislation establishes a necessary framework to ensure that we know where AFFF is utilized, stored, and potentially poses a risk to our communities. The phased reporting requirements—public facilities by 2027 and private facilities by 2028—allow for a practical implementation process while still prioritizing accountability and safety.
- 5. Public Accessibility for Informed Action:** One of the most significant aspects of LD 400 is the provision that the compiled information will be publicly accessible. This transparency is vital, empowering not only emergency services but also local communities

to understand the risks they may face. It allows firefighters to effectively prepare for incidents involving AFFF and enhances our overall response strategies.

In conclusion, we urge you to support LD 400. By establishing a comprehensive inventory of AFFF, we can take a significant step toward ensuring the safety of our firefighters, protecting the health of our communities, and mitigating the environmental impacts of toxic firefighting foams. Together, we can navigate the challenges posed by AFFF and foster a safer, healthier Maine.

### **LD 407 An Act to Prohibit the Use of Aqueous Film-forming Foam at the Former Brunswick Naval Air Station**

The Professional Fire Fighters of Maine are in strong support for LD 407 as this proposed legislation is crucial in light of the recent PFAS incidents in Brunswick, and we believe that its passage will significantly protect public health, safety, and the environment.

**1. Addressing Environmental and Public Health Concerns:** The recent discoveries of PFAS contamination associated with the use of AFFF at the former Brunswick Naval Air Station have raised serious concerns for our communities and the environment. PFAS are known as "forever chemicals" due to their persistence in the environment and human body. They pose potential health risks, including adverse effects on liver function, immune response, and even links to certain cancers. Prohibiting the use of AFFF in Brunswick is a critical step in preventing further environmental degradation and safeguarding the health of residents and first responders.

**2. AFFF's Ineffectiveness and Alternatives:** The reliance on AFFF for firefighting is increasingly being questioned, especially in light of available effective and much safer alternatives. Many modern firefighting techniques and products can effectively manage flammable liquid fires without the environmental and health risks associated with AFFF. By prohibiting its use at this site, we can encourage the adoption of safer, more sustainable firefighting practices.

**3. Setting a Precedent for Future Action:** Passing LD 407 sends a strong message that Maine is committed to prioritizing public safety and environmental health over outdated practices. It sets a precedent that other municipalities and firefighting agencies can follow, fostering a statewide culture of responsible fire management and environmental stewardship. Taking decisive action now at the Brunswick Naval Air Station can inspire further protective measures statewide.

**4. Protecting Future Generations:** Our responsibility as fire fighters extends beyond our current duties; it encompasses a commitment to future generations. By eliminating the use of AFFF in Brunswick, we can take proactive measures to ensure a healthier environment for our children and grandchildren. Protecting our water supplies, ecosystems, and overall public health will benefit the communities we serve for years to come.

**5. Enhancing Community Trust:** Finally, by supporting LD 407, we demonstrate our commitment to transparency and accountability in firefighting practices. The passage of this legislation reassures the public that we are taking meaningful steps to protect them from harmful substances and that we are dedicated to using methods that minimize risks.

In conclusion, we urge you to support LD 407. The prohibition of AFFF at the former Brunswick Naval Air Station is a necessary and forward-thinking measure that prioritizes public health, environmental sustainability, and the wellbeing of our firefighters. Together, we can foster a safer and more responsible approach to firefighting in Maine.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues.

Respectfully Submitted on this day, Wednesday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Michael Scott, President  
Professional Fire Fighters of Maine