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February 12, 2020

To: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass  
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Patricia F. O'Connor, Health Education and Advocacy Unit (HEAU)

Re: House Bill 424 (Public Health - Products Containing a Flame-Retardant  
Chemical): SUPPORT

The HEAU submits the following written testimony in support of House Bill 424. The bill aims to reduce the harm suffered by firefighters and children exposed to toxic chemicals used as flame retardants that are linked to cancer, endocrine disruption and neurological harms.

Current law prohibits the sale of child care products intended for use by children under the age of 3 if they contain more than a nominal concentration of the flame-retardant chemicals TCEP or TDCPP. This bill would additionally ban new toxic chemicals that have replaced the specific chemicals as flame retardants, and does so by banning an entire class of chemicals used in furniture and juvenile products, defined as products used by persons under 12 years old.

The HEAU supports the expansion of this important consumer protection. Research from the Federal Consumer Product Safety Commission has determined that chemical flame retardants do not provide fire safety and recommends that manufacturers of furniture and children's products stop using them. The chemicals accumulate in the body and are linked to infertility and heart disease in adults and reduced IQ and poor attention in children, among other problems. In addition, products containing chemical flame retardants produce highly toxic carcinogenic fumes when they burn that penetrate firefighters' protective gear. More than half of all career firefighter line-of-duty deaths are from job-related cancers. Over time, the physical harms associated with the toxic chemicals are proving to be greater than their utility, justifying increased restrictions on use of the chemicals.

For these reasons, we ask that the Committee return a favorable report on the bill.

cc: Members, Health & Government Operations Committee