



Fire Fighting Foam Coalition

February 07, 2022

Subject: Testimony to Maryland Health and Government Operations Committee on House Bill # 0275 (SB 0273)

Honorable Chair Pendergrass and Members of this 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 House Bill 0275. 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. In fact, we believe that most municipal fire services can transition now but this is not the case for industrial fire services.

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 January 2023, 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 some very specific exemptions that would include refineries, chemical facilities, bulk fuel loading terminals and fixed foam suppression systems. Meanwhile we in the foam industry and within government research grants will continue the task of improving firefighting foams that do not contain PFAS chemicals.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitch Hubert
Technical Director
Fire Fighting Foam Coalition (FFFC)
www.FFFC.org

3033 Wilson Boulevard
Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22201

(571) 384-7915