



## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

### General Court

December 18, 2023

The Honorable Andrea Joy Campbell  
Attorney General  
One Ashburton Place  
Boston, MA 02108

#### **Re: Request for Litigation and Investigation Regarding Firefighter Turnout Gear**

We write to respectfully request that the Commonwealth join ongoing litigation against firefighter turnout gear manufactures; gear that allegedly has exposed the Commonwealth's firefighters to disease causing chemicals. As you know, in 2022, the Attorney General's Office (AGO) sued manufacturers of toxic "forever" chemicals for contaminating Massachusetts drinking water and damaging natural resources.<sup>1</sup> That lawsuit alleged that "the manufacturers repeatedly violated state and federal laws protecting drinking water and prohibiting consumer deception by marketing, manufacturing, and selling PFAS-containing aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) to government entities, counties, municipalities, local fire departments, businesses and residents in Massachusetts while knowing of the serious dangers the chemicals posed."<sup>2</sup> We greatly appreciate the AGO's efforts in this litigation regarding AFFF substances. However, there is an important area unaddressed by this lawsuit – firefighter turnout gear. Our firefighters have already taken the lead on defending themselves.<sup>3</sup> We ask that you join their efforts and expand your ongoing litigation to include firefighter turnout gear.

As AGO's 2022 suit recognized, AFFF substances allegedly exposed firefighters to toxic chemicals. However, AFFF substances are not the only pathway for firefighters to come in contact with toxic chemicals. As explained by one study:

Because of the documented adverse health effects of PFAS, the primary concern to date in the fire services has centered on repeated use and exposure to AFFF. In this work, an additional PFAS exposure source for firefighters is presented: PFAS that are shed from their protective clothing. Textiles used as firefighter turnout gear were found to have high levels of total fluorine (up to 2%), and individual PFAS

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<sup>1</sup> [AG Healey Sues Manufacturers of Toxic 'Forever' Chemicals for Contaminating Massachusetts Drinking Water and Damaging Natural Resources | Mass.gov](#)

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> [Worcester firefighters with cancer file lawsuit against gear, PFAS makers \(telegram.com\)](#)

were identified and measured on new and used firefighting turnout gear. Used gear showed lower levels of PFAS as well as an increased migration into untreated material. A dust measurement from a textile storage area also suggests direct loss of PFAS from the fluoropolymers in the textiles. Because PFAS that are shed from the textiles used in turnout gear are more mobile, they represent another viable exposure source for firefighters that warrants further study.<sup>4</sup>

As we have all come to learn, PFAS, or Polyfluoroalkyl substances, is a class designation that includes nearly 10,000 chemicals used to make everyday items fireproof, waterproof, or non-stick. These chemicals have become ubiquitous in products ranging from cookware to furniture to children's toys – and critically, as a lining in firefighting gear – despite posing dangerous health risks. Even at low levels, the toxicity of PFAS chemicals can be devastating, increasing the risk of cancer, immunosuppression, birth defects, colitis, and other diseases.

Our firefighters place themselves in harm's way to protect the Commonwealth's residents and property. In doing so, they utilize gear, procured by the government, with the expectation that the gear will help protect them from harm. That gear should not provide short term protection at the cost of long-term harm. We respectfully request that your office undertake litigation related to firefighter turnout gear and help protect those who protect us.

Finally, we also request that you open an investigation into whether this turnout gear violated Chapter 93A's prohibition on unfair and deceptive trade practices. Turnout gear is sold to protect our firefighters; turnout gear that harms our firefighters is fundamentally unfair and deceptive.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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2nd Bristol District



**Senator Bruce E. Tarr**  
First Essex and Middlesex District



**Representative Carol A. Doherty**  
3rd Bristol District

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<sup>4</sup> See [Another Pathway for Firefighter Exposure to Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances: Firefighter Textiles](https://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/acs.estlett.0c00410), Graham F. Peaslee, John T. Wilkinson, Sean R. McGuinness, Meghanne Tighe, Nicholas Caterisano, Seryeong Lee, Alec Gonzales, Matthew Roddy, Simon Mills, and Krystle Mitchell, *Environmental Science & Technology Letters* 2020 7 (8), 594-599, available at: <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/acs.estlett.0c00410>



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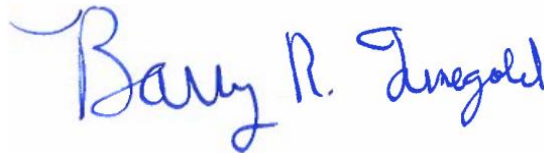
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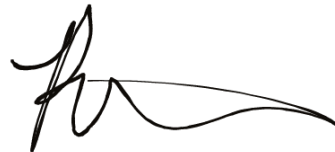
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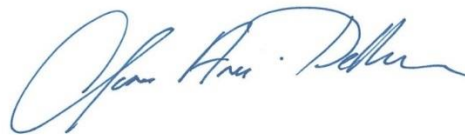
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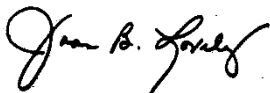
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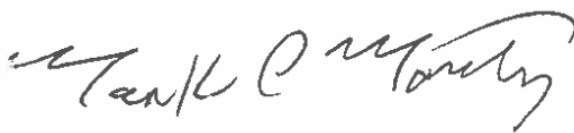
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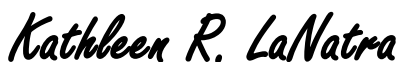
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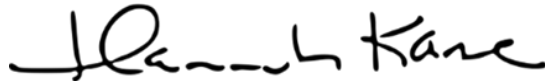
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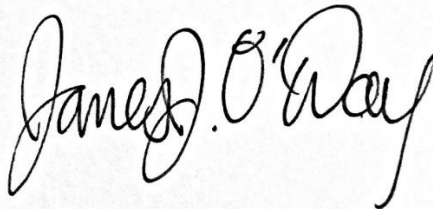
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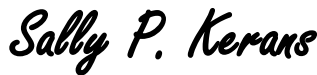
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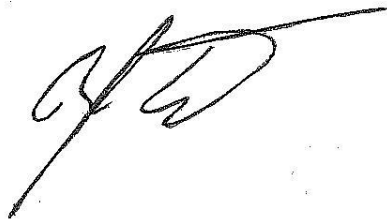
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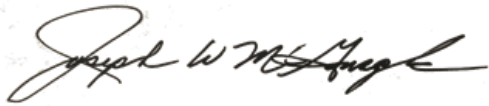
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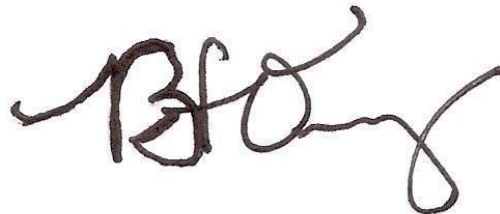
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