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Contact: Jennifer Quinn, jen.quinn@sierraclub.org - 570-789-3948

Pennsylvania Legislature Passes Landmark Bill to Protect Firefighters and Communities from Toxic PFAS Chemicals

Harrisburg, PA – After years of dedicated advocacy by firefighters, environmental organizations, public health experts, and concerned residents, the Pennsylvania General Assembly has passed Senate Bill 804. This bipartisan legislation is a major victory for the health of first responders and the safety of Pennsylvania's water and communities.

The new law bans the manufacture, sale, and distribution of Class B firefighting foams containing intentionally added PFAS chemicals beginning July 1, 2027, and prohibits their use by firefighting entities starting January 1, 2028, with limited exceptions for certain federal requirements and high-risk facilities such as airports and refineries. It also directs the State Fire Commissioner to assist departments in transitioning to safer, fluorine-free alternatives and establishes pathways for the responsible disposal of existing foam stocks. Additionally, manufacturers of turnout gear and other protective equipment must provide clear warnings when products contain intentionally added PFAS, giving firefighters the information they need to make safer choices.

"This is a win for every firefighter who has answered the call while unknowingly being exposed to 'forever chemicals,' and for every family that deserves clean water," said Jen Quinn, Legislative Director for Sierra Club Pennsylvania Chapter. "Firefighters and environmental advocates have worked side-by-side for years to make this possible. Today, Pennsylvania is taking a decisive step to reduce a leading source of PFAS contamination while protecting the people who protect us."

PFAS chemicals in firefighting foam have contaminated groundwater and drinking water supplies in communities across the Commonwealth, including near military bases, airports, and

training sites. A recent Sierra Magazine article documented the struggles of residents in rural Pennsylvania with PFAS exposure. These persistent chemicals are linked to increased risks of certain cancers, immune system effects, and other serious health concerns; risks that are especially elevated for firefighters due to both foam exposure and PFAS in protective gear. By phasing out these foams and improving transparency on equipment, the new law will help prevent future contamination, lower long-term cleanup costs, and improve the safety of those on the front lines.

“Clean water and firefighter safety are not competing priorities - they go hand in hand,” said Quinn. “For years, Sierra Club and our partner organizations and first responders have educated lawmakers, shared stories from impacted communities, and pushed for practical solutions. SB 804 shows that persistence and partnership delivers real results for Pennsylvanians.”

With final passage complete, the bill now heads to the Governor’s desk. We urge Governor Shapiro's swift signature so that Pennsylvania can begin the transition to safer firefighting practices and join more than a dozen other states that have already banned or phased out PFAS-containing firefighting foam.