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Good Afternoon Members of the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee.

My Name is Tom O'Donnell, I'm a 36-year veteran of the Pennsylvania Fire Service and proudly serving for the past 21 years as Chief of the Norristown Fire Department a combination fire department located in Montgomery County, I also serve as First Vice President for the Pennsylvania Career Fire Chief's Association and as a Board Member at the Pennsylvania Fire and Emergency Services Institute.

Today I would like to speak to you from a Fire Chief's perspective on what a firefighters cancer diagnoses has on a community.

As you know cancer is the leading cause of death among firefighters, and research suggests firefighters are at much higher risk of certain types of cancers when compared to the general population.

The harsh reality is that almost two-thirds of the firefighters battling fires today will be battling cancer tomorrow. As you can imagine a cancer diagnosis would be devastating news to a firefighter and their families, but it also has rippled effects both operationally (staffing challenges) and administratively (operating budgets) on every fire department and impacts the delivery of service to the community in that community expectations are lost when well-trained and equipped firefighters don't show up at their door when an emergency strikes.

In 2014, the US health system spent roughly \$87.8 billion on direct cancer-related health care.

Our Firefighters are the backbones of our operations and without them our operations simply don't work and so we need to ensure laws are enacted to protect and safeguard every single firefighter, without commonsense laws we will continue to expose our firefighters unnecessarily to the harmful effects of cancer and encourage manufacturers to place profit and greed over the safety of our public servants.

Our firefighters have the backs of the people in your legislative districts, and we ask that you have the backs of our firefighters and ban PFAS here in Pennsylvania.

You owe it to every firefighter and their families who've made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their community.

Thank you for your service.