MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Ban PFAS in Firefighting Foam

A. 445 – Steck  S. 439 – Hoylman

An ACT to amend the executive law, in relation to reducing the use of PFAS chemicals in firefighting activities

JUSTIFICATION

PFOA and PFOS are part of a class of man-made chemicals called PFAS, or perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl chemicals. Recent water contamination cases in New York State have sounded the alarm about the dangers associated with PFAS contamination. In Newburgh and Suffolk County, PFOS was used in firefighting foam that seeped into the groundwater through firefighting and training activities. Exposure to PFAS can lead to higher rates of kidney and testicular cancer, higher cholesterol levels, suppressed immune system, thyroid problems, and adverse developmental effects and decreased immune response in children.

The New York State Drinking Water Council recently voted to recommend that the New York State Department of Health adopt a drinking water standard of 10 ppt for PFOA and PFOS. If adopted, this would be the most rigorous drinking water standards in the nation for these harmful emerging contaminants. While we work to treat drinking water for harmful PFAS chemicals, we must ensure that we do not continue to pollute our drinking water sources with additional PFAS contamination. Without a ban on PFAS in firefighting foam, the contaminant will continue to pollute drinking water near airports, air bases and firehouses where foam is commonly used and stored. PFAS-free foams are effective and readily available for use.

This bill would ban the entire class of PFAS chemicals from class B firefighting foam used and manufactured in New York. It also requires written notification of any PFAS chemicals found in personal protective firefighting equipment (such as jackets, pants, and helmets) at the time of sale. This legislation is critical to protecting New York’s water supplies across the state from unnecessary and harmful PFAS contamination.