Assembly Resolution No. 39

BY: M. of A. Buttenschon

MEMORIALIZING Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim January 2023, as Firefighter Cancer Prevention Month in the State of New York

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize official months that are set aside to increase awareness of serious health issues that affect the lives of our noble firemen and all citizens of New York State; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body hereby memorializes Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim January 2023, as Firefighter Cancer Prevention Month in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of National Firefighter Cancer Prevention Month; and

WHEREAS, January is designated as Firefighter Cancer Prevention Month to provide firefighters the necessary tools and guidance to develop life-saving protocols for cancer prevention and to support those with a cancer diagnosis within their departments; and

WHEREAS, Bringing increased public awareness to occupational cancer in the fire service will help generate greater legislative support for states and to establish presumptive disabilities for all cancers affecting firefighters; and

WHEREAS, According to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, firefighters have a nine percent greater chance of being diagnosed with cancer than the U.S. General Population, and a 14 percent greater chance of dying from cancer than the general population; and

WHEREAS, Additionally, firefighter occupational cancer is the leading cause of line-of-duty deaths in the fire service; and

WHEREAS, Firefighting settings are complex and contain various hazardous substances, exposing these brave men and women to hundreds of different chemicals in the form of gases, vapors, and particulates; some of these chemical substances are known or suspected to cause cancer, and many are byproducts of combustion or burning, such as benzene and formaldehyde; others come from the materials burning or in the fire debris, such as asbestos from older structures; and

WHEREAS, Firefighters can come into contact with chemicals by breathing them in, getting them on their skin or in their eyes, or by ingesting them; if protective clothing, known as turnout gear, is not adequately cleaned or stored after a fire response or training event, chemicals on the gear or equipment can contaminate vehicles and the fire station; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, reusing dirty turnout gear or respiratory protection can also result in exposures to hazardous substances; these

exposures can occur by skin contact with contaminated personal protective equipment (PPE) or by breathing in or ingesting particles from contaminated PPE; and

WHEREAS, It is important for the Fire Service to educate its members about safe work practices; effective training promotes a safety culture that cultivates sound work practices; sound work practices are designed to reduce exposures to hazardous agents, which is key to reducing occupational illnesses, including cancer; and

WHEREAS, Training that increases cancer awareness and physical well-being may encourage firefighters to adopt work practices that lower their exposures to cancer-causing substances; it can also help promote healthier lifestyles which may also reduce their cancer risk and increase the use of cancer screening tools; and

WHEREAS, Finally, an important component in the prevention of cancer in the Fire Service is learning more about it; subsequently, the National Firefighter Registry (NFR) was established as a voluntary registry of active and former firefighters with the goal of understanding and reducing cancer in the United States Fire Service; and

WHEREAS, It is imperative that there be greater awareness of the dangers of occupational cancer, and more must be done to increase activity at the local, State and national levels; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim January 2023, as Firefighter Cancer Prevention Month in the State of New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New York.