



# INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS®

HAROLD A. SCHAITBERGER  
General President

EDWARD A. KELLY  
General Secretary-Treasurer

May 7, 2019

The Honorable Paul Tonko  
Chairman  
Environment and Climate Change  
Subcommittee  
US House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Shimkus  
Ranking Member  
Environment and Climate Change  
Subcommittee  
US House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Tonko and Ranking Member Shimkus,

On behalf of the 316,000 professional fire fighters and emergency medical responders of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) currently serving our nation, I am writing in support of H.R. 1603, the "Alan Reinstein Ban Asbestos Now Act of 2019."

As you know, fire fighters face a higher risk of asbestos exposure than the general population due to asbestos becoming airborne when disturbed or damaged by fire. Asbestos exposures occur as fire fighters enter burning buildings, extinguish fires, and open walls and ceilings to check for fire extension. These activities are daily occurrences accounting for thousands of fire fighter exposures. Asbestos fibers can remain on the turnout gear and station clothing, and spread to apparatus cabs and fire stations. Fire fighters can inhale large amounts of these microscopic fibers, and unknowingly increase their risk of developing an asbestos-related disease such as Mesothelioma, Lung Cancer, and Asbestosis. It is worth noting that a multi-year study identified fire fighters suffering from mesothelioma at a rate that is 200% greater than the U.S. population as a whole. However, Asbestosis and Mesothelioma are preventable diseases by eliminating the occurrences of exposure.

The Alan Reinstein Ban Asbestos Now Act raises exposure prevention to a new level by prohibiting the inclusion of asbestos fibers in common building materials and construction products, such as flooring and ceiling tiles, roofing, cement, textured coatings, fiberboard, and insulation. Simply put, banning asbestos and asbestos-laden products today will result in healthier and safer fire fighters tomorrow. With your support, the adverse and harmful health impacts of this poison will be eliminated.

Again, the IAFF urges you to support H.R. 1603, and I thank you for your support of our nation's fire fighters and your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Harold A. Schaitberger  
General President