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Firefighter Cancer Screenings Act

HB 17 – SB 12

Bill Analysis

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Due to exposure to toxic substances while on duty, firefighters can face an increased risk of long-term health problems, including an elevated risk of cancer. According to the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), 72 percent of IAFF member line-of-duty deaths in 2023 were caused by occupational cancer. Additionally, according to the Firefighter Cancer Support Network, from 2002 to 2019, cancer accounted for 66 percent of career firefighter line-of-duty deaths. Texas has recently lost many firefighters because of cancer, including Lieutenant Dennis Page from the Dallas Fire Department, Captain William Gunderson from the Houston Fire Department, and James Bobbitt and Wade Cannon from the Flower Mound Fire Department. Cannon's diagnosis and commitment to spreading cancer awareness prompted several of the members of the Flower Mound Fire Department to undergo cancer screenings, leading to early cancer detections for two colleagues. This bill seeks to combat the elevated risk of cancer to firefighters by requiring political subdivisions that employ firefighters to offer occupational cancer screenings to firefighters at no cost during the firefighter's fifth year of service and then subsequently once every year.

This bill amends current law relating to periodic health screenings for firefighters

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Commission on Fire Protection in SECTION 2 (Section 180.011, Local Government Code) of this bill.

ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Authorizes this Act to be cited as the Firefighter Cancer Screenings Act.

SECTION 2. Amends Chapter 180, Local Government Code, by adding Section 180.011, as follows:

> Sec. 180.011. OCCUPATIONAL CANCER SCREENING FOR FIREFIGHTERS. (a) Defines "firefighter."
>
> (b) Requires a political subdivision that employs firefighters to offer an occupational cancer screening to each firefighter

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at no cost to the firefighter in the fifth year of the firefighter's employment, and once every year following the initial screening.

(c) Requires that the occupational cancer screening offered under Subsection (b) be confidential, and in addition to testing for cancer, include certain health tests.

(d) Provides that a firefighter is eligible to receive a chest x-ray during the screening under this section once every five years.

(e) Requires the Texas Commission on Fire Protection (TCFP) to adopt rules establishing minimum standards for the screening under this section using standards developed by the National Fire Protection Association.

(f) Provides that, notwithstanding Subsection (b), a political subdivision that employs firefighters is not required to offer a screening under this section if the political subdivision offers an annual occupational medical examination under a plan submitted to TCFP no later than February 1 of each year. Requires that the plan be endorsed by a physician and be in substantial compliance with standards developed by the National Fire Protection Association. Requires TCFP to adopt rules to implement this subsection.

EFFECTIVE DATE

January 1, 2027.