To require the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology to conduct a study of personal protective equipment worn by firefighters to determine the prevalence and concentration of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 19, 2019

Mrs. Shaheen (for herself and Mr. Gardner) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To require the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology to conduct a study of personal protective equipment worn by firefighters to determine the prevalence and concentration of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, and for other purposes.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

4 This Act may be cited as the “Guaranteeing Equipment Safety for Firefighters Act of 2019”.

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SEC. 2. NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY STUDY ON PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES IN PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT WORN BY FIREFIGHTERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the enactment of this Act, the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology shall, in consultation with the Director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, commence a study of the contents and composition of new and unused personal protective equipment worn by firefighters.

(b) CONTENTS OF STUDY.—In carrying out the study required by subsection (a), the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology shall examine—

(1) the identity, prevalence, and concentration of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (commonly known as “PFAS”) in the personal protective equipment worn by firefighters;

(2) the conditions and extent to which per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances are released into the environment over time from the degradation of personal protective equipment from normal use by firefighters; and
(3) the relative risk of exposure to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances faced by firefighters from—

(A) their use of personal protective equipment; and

(B) degradation of personal protective equipment from normal use by firefighters.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director shall submit to Congress a report describing—

(1) the findings of the Director with respect to the study carried out under subsection (a); and

(2) recommendations on what additional research or technical improvements to personal protective equipment materials or components should be pursued to avoid unnecessary occupational exposure among firefighters to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances through personal protective equipment.

SEC. 3. RESEARCH ON PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES IN PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT WORN BY FIREFIGHTERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 540 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology shall—
(1) issue a solicitation for research proposals to carry out the research recommendations identified in the report submitted under section 2(c); and

(2) award grants to applicants that submit research proposals to develop safe alternatives to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances in personal protective equipment.

(b) CRITERIA.—The Director shall select research proposals to receive a grant under subsection (a) on the basis of merit, using criteria identified by the Director, including the likelihood that the research results will address the findings of the Director with respect to the study conducted under section 2(a).

(c) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—Any entity or group of 2 or more entities may submit to the Director a research proposal in response to the solicitation for research proposals under subsection (a), including—

(1) State and local agencies;

(2) public institutions, including public institutions of higher education;

(3) private corporations; and

(4) nonprofit organizations.

(d) FUNDING.—

(1) REQUESTS.—Beginning in the first full fiscal year following the date of the enactment of this
Act, and not less frequently than once each year thereafter for 2 years, the Director may request such funding as the Director considers necessary to carry out this section.

(2) LIMITATION.—In carrying out this section, the Director may not expend or obligate more than $5,000,000 in any 1 fiscal year.

SEC. 4. AUTHORITY FOR DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY TO CONSULT WITH EXPERTS ON MATTERS RELATING TO PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES.

In carrying out this Act, the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology may consult with Federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations, State and local governments, and science and research institutions determined by the Director to have scientific or material interest in reducing unnecessary occupational exposure to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances by firefighters.