



STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0001

Paul R. LePage
GOVERNOR

1 August 2017

The 128th Legislature of the State of Maine
State House
Augusta, ME

Dear Honorable Members of the 128th Legislature:

Under the authority vested in me by Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, I am hereby vetoing LD 182, "An Act To Protect Firefighters by Establishing a Prohibition on the Sale and Distribution of New Upholstered Furniture Containing Certain Flame-retardant Chemicals."

I fully support the brave men and women firefighters around the state for their dedicated public service. Keeping them as safe as possible is a priority, but this bill is not the way to do it. The amended bill prohibits the use of any chemical flame retardant in new residential upholstered furniture sold in Maine as of January 2019. However, public facilities such as schools, hospitals and state offices are exempted in the bill. These entities will still be allowed to purchase furniture containing flame retardants. It also does not address numerous consumer products, such as electronics, building materials, home appliances and vehicles containing flame retardants.


By prohibiting the use of all chemicals, this bill eliminates the ability for industry to innovatively develop substances used as flame retardants in furniture. This bill also bypasses the scientific review process provided to the multiple state agencies in current law; instead, it assumes harm to human health from all chemical flame retardants under conditions experienced by firefighters.

Firefighters are routinely exposed to chemical compounds during fire incidents, such as benzene and hydrogen cyanide, from a variety of sources commonly found in structure fires. Many of those substances are highly toxic and thought to be responsible for high rates of disease among firefighters. This bill will not do anything to address these issues. During the committee review, firefighters themselves stated the most effective way to protect the firefighting community is increased use of respiratory protection during all phases of fire response and standardized cleaning of gear after every fire incident.

Not only does this bill create additional red tape for businesses, but it could also lead to Maine consumers having to pay higher prices for furniture. It will disrupt interstate commerce and could decrease the furniture products Maine retailers can sell to their customers. I applaud the intent of the bill, but there are other ways to protect firefighters without negatively impacting the economy.

For these reasons, I return LD 182 unsigned and vetoed. I strongly urge the Legislature to sustain it.

Sincerely,


Paul R. LePage
Governor



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