



SB23-032

LONG TITLE: Concerning the establishment of a wildfire detection technology system pilot program, and, in connection therewith, making an appropriation.

SHORT TITLE: Wildfire Detection Technology Pilot Program

SPONSORS: Senators Simpson and Ginal/Representative Lynch

COMMITTEES: Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee

PURPOSE OF THE BILL: To establish a pilot program for remote detection of wildfires in their earliest stages.

PROPOSERS OF THE BILL: Public safety (fire) officials; those interested in AI technology.

POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS: Forestry and fire officials in wildfire prone areas

Is this bill necessary this year? There is no deadline.

BACKGROUND: Similar bills were introduced in 2020 (HB 1171) and 2022 (HB 1148) but failed at the appropriations level. This bill appropriates \$2 million over a four-year period.

How does the bill change current law? The bill requires that the Center for Excellence for Advanced Technology Aerial Firefighting in the Department of Public Safety (DPS) implement one or more pilot programs using remote camera technology to detect, identify, or confirm the existence of wildfires. The center may acquire or contract for artificial intelligence technologies as part of the pilot program. The bill directs agencies of state and local governments to provide information, assistance, and site access as necessary for the program's implementation. The Center of Excellence must implement the pilot program by April 2024, and annually report to the Wildfire Matters Review Committee beginning in August 2024. For FY 2023-24, the bill includes an appropriation of \$2.0 million from the General Fund for use by the Division of Fire Prevention and Control in the DPS to implement the remote camera program. The pilot program repeals on September 1, 2027

Does the bill affect the prior appropriations system? No

How is the bill implemented? There will be a number of logistical considerations including siting of equipment at fixed locations, travel between locations, and training of staff. Staff must interact with stakeholders and obtain easements, manage use agreements, train fire managers, and collect performance data for reports, requiring 1.0 FTE to concentrate on field deployment, installation, and ongoing maintenance of cameras and associated hardware. See funding notes below.

Fiscal Impact : Pursuant to the fiscal note, an amount equal to 15 percent of General Fund appropriations must be set aside in the General Fund statutory reserve beginning in FY 2022-23. Based on this fiscal note, the bill is expected to increase the amount of General Fund held in reserve by the amounts shown in Table 1, which will decrease the amount of General Fund available for other purposes. Technical Note: For FY 2023-24, the bill includes a General Fund appropriation of \$2.0 million to the DPS. The fiscal note assumes this appropriation funds four years of pilot program operations,

including both direct costs and centrally appropriated costs. If this is the intent of the General Assembly, the DPS will either require roll forward spending authority for this appropriation, or funding for the program should be placed in a cash fund and either continuously or annually appropriated from the cash fund to the DPS. This fiscal note will be revised if additional information or amendments provide clarification on the intended funding for the pilot program.

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