



September 26, 2018

Senator Rand Paul, M.D.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Federal Spending
Oversight & Emergency Management
Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Gary Peters
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Federal Spending
Oversight & Emergency Management
Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: August 26 Hearing on “The Federal Role in the Toxic PFAS Chemical Crisis”

Dear Chairman Paul and Ranking Member Peters:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to commend the Committee for holding a hearing on PFAS chemicals and to urge decisive federal action to stop further contamination of our drinking water. Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a family of toxic chemicals that pose serious threats to human health. Research shows probable links between PFAS and cancer, immune system deficiencies, high cholesterol, low fertility, and developmental issues in children and infants.¹ Moreover, the health risks of PFAS are magnified because they bioaccumulate in the food chain and persist for a long time in the environment. Even trace amounts of PFAS can be hazardous to our health.

Unfortunately, these widely-used toxic chemicals are contaminating drinking water across the country. In Oakland County, Michigan, wastewater from Tribar Manufacturing Inc. has led to PFAS concentrations in Norton Creek more than 450 times higher than the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) alert level.² In Fayetteville, North Carolina, privately-owned wells near the Chemours plant are

¹ (2018, January 10). PFAS Health Effects. Retrieved September 25, 2018, from <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/health-effects.html>

² (2018, September 24). 'Astronomical' PFAS level sets new Michigan ... - MLive.com. Retrieved September 25, 2018, from https://www.mlive.com/news/index.ssf/2018/09/astronomical_pfas_contaminatio.html

contaminated with GenX as well as 16 other types of PFAS chemicals.³ Studies indicate that known cases of PFAS contamination represent only a fraction of the problem; it is estimated that 1,500 drinking water systems serving 110 million Americans could be contaminated.⁴

Despite these staggering numbers, the actions taken so far at the federal level have neither matched the scale nor urgency of our national PFAS emergency. So far, the U.S. EPA has only issued lifetime health advisories, and for only two types of PFAS—PFOA and PFOS—out of the thousands of types of PFAS currently polluting our drinking water. Moreover, EPA’s health advisory for 70 parts per trillion does not set an enforceable standard, and is 70 times higher than what is thought to be an approximate “safe” concentration in drinking water. Prominent experts recommend a health protective standard of only one part per trillion.⁵

The federal government has an important and necessary role in keeping people safe from these public health threats, and there are a number of actions that can and should be taken to remedy the PFAS crisis and to prevent future incidents from occurring.

We are calling on Congress and the EPA to take the following actions:

1. **Prevent future contamination.** To safeguard our drinking water and health, we need a national moratorium on further use of PFAS chemicals until and unless any specific ones are proven safe. Any exceptions should be strictly limited to true emergency needs where alternatives are not yet available, and we should work to develop safer alternatives for these uses as soon as possible.
2. **Ensure safe drinking water.** The federal government should set a health protective standard of *one part per trillion* for PFAS as a class of chemicals. EPA could accomplish this by setting a Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL), which would protect drinking water and ensure adequate cleanup of contaminated sites.
3. **Hold polluters accountable.** Instead of imposing a significant burden on communities and states, users and manufacturers of PFAS should pay for clean up, monitoring, and other expenses of this contamination. EPA should designate PFAS under existing polluter-pays programs, including section 311 of the Clean Water Act, Superfund, and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

³ (2018, September 8). More compounds found in wells near Chemours - News - The Retrieved September 25, 2018, from <http://www.fayobserver.com/news/20180908/more-compounds-found-in-wells-near-chemours>

⁴ (2018, May 22). Report: Up to 110 Million Americans Could Have PFAS ... - EWG. Retrieved September 25, 2018, from <https://www.ewg.org/research/report-110-million-americans-could-have-pfas-contaminated-drinking-water>

⁵ Grandjean, P., & Clapp, R. (2015). Perfluorinated alkyl substances: emerging insights into health risks. *New solutions: a journal of environmental and occupational health policy*, 25(2), 147-163.

We look forward to working with the committee on this important issue.

Sincerely,

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