



April 5, 2021

Oral Testimony Regarding:

LD 960 - An Act To Require Reporting of Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances, PFAS, in Products and of Discharges of Firefighting Foam Containing PFAS

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the committee:

Thank you to the Maine Legislature's Committee on Environment and Natural Resources for providing this opportunity for public comment on LD 960.

My name is Laurel Schaidler and I am a senior scientist at Silent Spring Institute. Since 2009, my research has focused on PFAS exposures from drinking water, food packaging, and consumer products. I lead two PFAS-related health studies, one of which is part of a national multi-site study funded and coordinated by the CDC. I am also part of the STEEP Superfund Research Program, led by the University of Rhode Island in collaboration with Harvard and Silent Spring.

As you consider this legislation on PFAS disclosure and reporting, I'd like to share some key points based on my own research and on other published scientific studies.

PFAS are common in many everyday products, even when they aren't needed or can be substituted.

A 2020 study by researchers in Europe and the US documented over 200 uses of PFAS [1]. They're used everything from microwave popcorn bags and dental floss to carpets and paints. They're even in guitar strings and climbing ropes. PFAS can migrate out of products and end up in our bodies, contributing to PFAS exposure in the general population [2, 3]. PFAS can also pollute communities where they are manufactured, and after products are thrown away, PFAS can enter the environment through landfill leachate and land application of biosolids from wastewater treatment plants.

A 2019 research study developed a framework to evaluate the essentiality of the many uses of PFAS on the global market [4]. According to this framework, many current uses of PFAS are considered non-essential, meaning that they are not critical for health, safety and function. Other uses, such as the use of PFAS in AFFF, can be avoided by substituting with similar products that don't contain PFAS but have the same function.

We need class-based solutions to phase out non-essential uses of PFAS.

According to EPA, there are over 9,000 PFAS compounds [5], which means it's simply not possible to evaluate the toxicity of each one individually. The American Public Health Association [6] and a growing number of expert scientists [7] have recommended approaching PFAS as a class and reducing overall PFAS exposures by eliminating non-essential uses of PFAS.

Disclosing the uses of PFAS will create better transparency to inform decision making.

It is difficult, and sometimes impossible, for consumers to figure out which products contain PFAS and which are PFAS free. Same for retailers and businesses that rely on products made by other companies. Disclosing information about the uses of PFAS would provide information about which products contain PFAS. This information could also be used to identify geographical areas where PFAS are used by businesses and industries in order to identify and avoid contamination of the local environment, in Maine and elsewhere.

PFAS are frequently detected in drinking water and PFAS-containing firefighting foam is frequently a source.

Just last week, a report by Consumer Reports found PFAS in 117 out of 120 public water supplies that they tested across the country [8]. PFAS are extremely persistent in the environment. Current contamination of drinking water supplies can often be traced by to AFFF use decades ago. I co-authored a 2016 journal article that found public water supplies in areas with military fire training areas and airports using AFFF were more likely to have PFAS in their water [9].

Tracking discharges of AFFF will provide critical information to help identify public water supplies, private wells, and water bodies that should be monitored for PFAS over time as those PFAS move through the environment.

PFAS exposures have been linked to a wide range of health effects.

These include cancer, effects on thyroid function, immune suppression, low birth weight, and decreased fertility [10]. A study in Denmark by my colleague, Harvard professor Philippe Grandjean, found an association between exposure to a PFAS chemical and more severe COVID-19 symptoms [11]. A growing body of evidence is raising concerns about newer PFAS chemicals now used in consumer products. For instance, in 2020, the FDA withdrew approval from some of these newer PFAS in food packaging [12] based on the results of new toxicity testing by FDA scientists [13].

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide comment.

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