



Good morning, Senator Muth, Representative Scott, Representative Munroe and other members of the committee. Thank you for holding this joint policy hearing. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on the important topic of addressing exposure to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances or PFAS in Pennsylvania.

My name is Ian Louda and I'm the Southeast Pennsylvania Legislative Coordinator for Clean Water Action. Clean Water Action is a national non-profit environmental organization with roughly 90,000 members across Pennsylvania. Since our founding during the campaign to pass the landmark Clean Water Act in 1972, we've worked to enact strong protections for our health and environment by bringing issue expertise, solution-oriented thinking and people power to the table.

Pennsylvania has already taken some initial steps to tackle PFAS. Last year, Pennsylvania Attorney General Michelle Henry filed a complaint in Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court against DuPont, Chemours, and Corteva for being in violation of Pennsylvania's Consumer Protection Law due to contamination that result from them intentionally adding PFAS to their products which ultimately denies residents of their environmental rights under the Pennsylvania Constitutions Article 1 Section 27. Last year also marked Pennsylvania setting for the first time ever in its history a state drinking water maximum contamination level for the most common constituents of these toxic chemicals. But given PFAS's pervasiveness in our environment we must build upon these efforts and tackle other sources of exposure.

One area that merits focus is fire fighting in Pennsylvania.

Firefighters face occupational hazards on a daily basis as they respond to calls to control and extinguish fires that threaten life and property, as well as to rescue persons from confinement or dangerous situations. But the hazards they face extend beyond the nature of these calls and to the equipment they use in response to them. That's because this equipment often contains PFAS.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has identified 39 sites across 19 counties that have been contaminated by PFAS. The biggest cause of contamination among these sites has been from the use of PFAS-based class B firefighting foams also known as aqueous film forming foam.

PFAS-based class B firefighting foams have been used since the 1970s for vapor suppression, firefighting and firefighting training at military bases, airports, storage tanks, petroleum/chemical operations, rail transportation and some power generating facilities. PFAS chemicals are used in these foam products because of their ability to produce a fast-spreading foam.

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However, efforts are underway all over the world to move away from this toxic product which increases the potential of our firefighters to develop dangerous health conditions, like cancer. The U.S. Department of Defense stopped purchasing PFAS-containing firefighting foam last year and will phase out its use entirely by the end of this year. The Federal Aviation Administration also recently authorized airports to use firefighting foam that does not contain PFAS. Policies banning Class B firefighting foam containing PFAS have passed in 15 states and the International Association of Fire Fighters has also been supportive of action along these lines at the federal level.

PFAS-free firefighting foams have already been put to use extinguishing jet fuel blazes at major international airports, including Australia's Sydney Airport, Dubai International in the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom's London Heathrow airport. Domestically, New York State Fire has tested two PFAS-free foams that they've found to be effective for fighting Class B fires but there are numerous other Class B products available that are also GreenScreen Certified. GreenScreen is the first eco-label for firefighting foam on the market and was launched to give manufacturers and users more information to choose more preferable products. The standard was developed in collaboration with a review team of leading manufacturers, scientists, government experts, and NGOs on the topic of PFAS-free foam.

We must be cautious of pursuing well intentioned efforts to address this issue, that in reality only limit rather than end the use of PFAS laden foam while allowing for its continued manufacture and sale. These efforts fail Pennsylvania's communities and firefighters by continuing to put them at potential risk of exposure and contamination.

Fire fighters also face additional risk just by gearing up.

A study led by Graham Peaslee, professor of physics at the University of Notre Dame found that fabric used for fire fighter turnout gear tested positive for the presence of PFAS. Peaslee's team tested more than 30 samples of used and unused personal protective equipment from six specialty textile manufacturers in the United States and found high concentrations of fluorine on the moisture barrier and outer shell. The study found that some of these chemicals have the ability to migrate off treated surfaces and materials, meaning the PFAS in the moisture barrier and outer shell could potentially contaminate the thermal layer and come in direct contact with skin. So, if fire fighters touch the gear, it gets on their hands, and if they go fight a fire and they put the gear on and take it off and then go eat and don't wash their hands, it could transfer hand to mouth, and if they're sweating and have sweat pores some of these chemicals could probably come off on the thermal layer and get into the skin.

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In 2021, International Association of Fire Fighters decided to no longer accept sponsorships or advertising from the chemical industry and to oppose PFAS in turnout gear. In 2023, the union announced it had retained three nationally recognized tort law firms to assist the union in its effort to end fire fighter cancer and remove PFAS from use in the fire service. A nationwide trial orchestrated by the International Association of Fire Fighters of the effectiveness of PFAS free gear is currently underway.

These circumstances are why Clean Water Action supports legislation like, HB 1541 and HB 1571. We see these bills as complementary to each other. HB 1541's phase in timeline for requiring the use of PFAS-free firefighting gear should not only give the needed science and manufacturing time to catch up but result in companies across the Commonwealth having more options and time to transition. A similar ban passed in Massachusetts and is currently being considered in California. As we wait for the ban to take effect, HB 1571's requirement of a warning label on PFAS laden gear will arm firefighters in the short term with the knowledge they need to understand their exposure risks and take what precautions they can to limit that exposure.

Everyday our fire fighters put their lives on the line to protect us and our communities. We should be honoring that service by doing everything under our control to protect them.

Thank you for your time today!

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