

American Academy of Pediatrics • American Public Health Association • Breast Cancer Action • Breast Cancer Prevention Partners • Children's Environmental Health Network • Endocrine Society • March of Dimes • National Environmental Health Association • National Hispanic Medical Association • National Medical Association • The Endocrine Disruption Exchange

Dear Member of Congress,

The undersigned public health groups, health professional groups and health affected groups urge you to retain provisions to the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020 (NDAA) that will protect infants, pregnant women, children and the general public from highly toxic pollutants known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). These ubiquitous substances pose severe health risks across the United States and represent a growing threat to public health. Amendments to the NDAA that deter further contamination, measure existing contamination, facilitate cleanup and monitor public health will help bring this urgent situation under control.

PFAS are a particularly dangerous form of contamination. They are persistent, meaning they do not readily break down, and highly mobile in the environment. As a result, PFAS are widespread and likely present in the drinking water of tens of millions of Americans. They can accumulate in human bodies and have been associated with harmful health effects such as cancer, reduced fetal growth, birth defects, thyroid disease, immune system dysfunction, kidney disease, liver damage, hormone disruption, low birth weight and other developmental effects, changes in cholesterol levels, and reproductive harm. Our organizations are committed to protecting the public from these harms and urge you to retain provisions that will protect children and adults from exposure to PFAS.

Developing infants and children are particularly vulnerable to PFAS exposure. They often have higher exposures to PFAS than adults and are more susceptible to their effects due to their rapidly growing and developing bodies. They consume more water per unit of body weight and tend to spend more time at home with exclusive use of residential water than other age groups. Of concern, almost all fetuses and infants will have some degree of exposure to PFAS, including fetal exposure during pregnancy through placental transfer. For infants, PFAS exposure may be further elevated through ingestion of contaminated breast milk from PFAS exposed mothers or infant formula contaminated by PFAS-containing food packaging or prepared with contaminated drinking water. PFAS exposure before birth or in early childhood has been associated with decreased birth weight, effects on renal function and lipid serum levels, and immune system dysfunction.

Fortunately, there are actions that you can take now to address this situation. The House and Senate National Defense Authorization Acts each contained significant measures to clean up industrial PFAS contamination and deter future contamination. We urge you to retain these provisions through conference. Among these, we urge you to retain:

- Provisions that helps remediate the most severe sites of PFAS contamination and deter future contamination by adding the PFAS class of chemicals as hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (superfund).
- Provisions that regulate discharges of PFAS as a class under the Clean Water Act. This will protect drinking water and waterways from PFAS water contamination.

- Provisions that ensure a rapid phase out of PFAS firefighting foams at Department of Defense (DoD) facilities and prohibit the use of PFAS firefighting foams in military training exercises.
- Provisions that study the health effects of PFAS on populations across the nation, monitor its prevalence in surface water, groundwater, soil and in drinking water systems and require reporting of PFAS releases into the environment by industrial producers and users.
- Provisions that ensure the most complete destruction possible when PFAS is incinerated.
- Provisions that require DoD to work with states and communities to prevent and clean up PFAS contamination, free up cleanup resources for the National Guard, and authorize service branches to make businesses and property owners whole again.
- Provisions under the Toxic Substances Control Act that collect manufacturing data on PFAS and require notification and approval by EPA before new uses of certain PFAS can be initiated.
- End the use of PFAS in military food packaging.

The PFAS health crisis is years in the making and it will take years to solve. However, addressing the public health concern of PFAS contamination is particularly important for improving maternal-child health. We once again urge you to seize upon opportunities in the National Defense Authorization Act to protect human health.

Sincerely,

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