Testimony of Deanna White to the House Health Finance and Policy Committee

April 1, 2022

Chair Liebling and members of the Committee,

My name is Deanna White and I am the State Director of Clean Water Action. I also serve as the Director of the Healthy Legacy Coalition – a health-based coalition focused on ensuring that consumer products – especially those for children – are made without the use of toxic chemicals.

The Healthy Legacy Coalition joins with Clean Water Action and its more than 50,000 members across Minnesota in support of four bills before you today- HF 2906, HF 2907, HF 2952 and HF3571. These bills are part of a larger PFAS Prevention Package that aims to stop the use of PFAS in a wide array of products. As I am sure the Committee knows, the best way to prevent the negative health impacts from chemicals like PFAS is to eliminate their use and avoid the exposure all together.

The cost of implementing these bills is very reasonable. **The fiscal notes represent an investment in Minnesota’s future**. Preventing additional PFAS contamination will save tens of millions of dollars in the future in clean up costs, negative impacts on business, water treatment and of course the cost of addressing the health impacts related to PFAS exposure.

PFAS are a class of chemicals in need of immediate action based on their threat to human health and widespread pollution in our environment. A 2015 consensus statement by over 200 experts raised serious concerns about PFAS.[[1]](#footnote-1)[[2]](#endnote-1) The experts’ concerns were so significant they recommended PFAS should only be used for essential purposes given their known health and environmental hazards.

Research at the CDC links PFAS to a variety of health concerns including decreased fertility, liver damage, and increased risk of asthma.[[3]](#footnote-2) .One recent study[[4]](#footnote-3) showed that exposure to certain PFAS can lead to [endocrine disruption](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160412019306221) in pregnant women [and their fetuses and other research shows that there is disproportionate transfer of certain PFAS through umbilical cord blood to newborns](https://europepmc.org/article/med/21937271)[[5]](#footnote-4). Despite industry claims, the newer generation of PFAS chemicals shouldn’t be considered safe. Studies by the National Institute of Environmental Health revealed that seven current-use PFAS induced similar toxicity as their phased-out counterparts.[[6]](#footnote-5)

PFAS are known as “forever chemicals” because they have the strongest covalent bonds in organic chemistry. Due to the strength of this bond, PFAS are virtually indestructible and last a long time in the environment. Eliminating non-essential uses of PFAS was identified as a key opportunity to **prevent pollution** in “Minnesota’s PFAS Blueprint”. We hope that the committee will agree that protecting public health and preventing PFAS pollution should be a top priority for the legislature.

The bills before the committee prohibit PFAS in four different product categories- cosmetics, cookware, ski wax and juvenile products.

Alarmingly, a wide array of beauty products. ranging from mascara to lip balm, contain PFAS chemicals. Cosmetics with PFAS pose a health risk not only to the people using them, but also to their children. According to scientific research, PFAS have been found in 97% of human blood samples.[[7]](#footnote-6) These chemicals, including new generation PFAS, have also been found in breastmilk[[8]](#footnote-7), where they pass into infants, putting their health and development at risk. HF 2906 would ensure that we are protected from future PFAS contamination.

One of the larger markets for PFAS is nonstick cookware coatings. A 2020 study which tested 24 types of coated cookware found most of the tested nonstick cooking pans and some baking pans are coated with PFAS.[[9]](#footnote-8) Waste created by the PFAS manufacturing process has contaminated communities in Minnesota and across the country. Last year this Legislature wisely banned the use of PFAS in food packaging, removing it from cookware is a logical next step.

We have learned that PFAS are added to ski wax to increase speeds; particularly in Nordic skiing races. A 2010 [Scandinavian study](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20158198/) showed that World Cup ski technicians had on average 45 times as many fluorocarbons in their blood as nonskiers[[10]](#footnote-9). Research has demonstrated PFAS migrates out of ski wax, attaching to the snow and soil underneath ski tracks. As snow melts, PFAS can contaminate groundwater.[[11]](#footnote-10) Water system tests in Vermont showed high levels of PFAS water contamination near local ski resorts. This is an unnecessary risk to our environment and our health that should be eliminated.

One of the bills before the committee prohibits PFAS in juvenile products – items that children come in close contact with. *Children should not be exposed to hazardous chemicals where they eat, sleep, and play.* Yet product testing has found PFAS in a variety of products for infants and kids under 12 years of age. The products in which PFAS was detected include baby bibs, car seats, and mattresses.[[12]](#footnote-11)

Children are more vulnerable to health impacts from chemicals because low levels of exposure can disrupt key stages of development. PFAS in particular is especially harmful to children. A review of 64 health studies found positive associations between childhood exposure to PFAS and asthma, high cholesterol, and reduced kidney function.[[13]](#footnote-12) It is not fair to expect already overburdened parents to have to conduct research projects for every product they buy. Children deserve to be protected and parents deserve to know that they can trust the products that they buy for their children to be safe. Some manufacturers are making products without PFAS, but it can be difficult to know for sure and there are not always affordable options available. Regulations like this can help address these challenges.

Just as with PFAS ski wax, when other PFAS containing products are used and disposed of, PFAS can migrate out of these products into the environment, including groundwater, and sewage sludge. As a result of the widespread use of PFAS, more and more communities are being forced to address PFAS contamination in their drinking water sources. The difficulty and expense in treating the contamination is a burden on communities and water systems. We know that more and more Americans are drinking water containing PFAS, leaving them at risk for health impacts.

One commonality all these products share is they can be made without PFAS. A wide array of PFAS-free products is currently available. All of the categories-cosmetics, cookware, juvenile products and ski wax have many PFAS-free alternatives on the market. Major brands, have also made commitments to phase-out their use.

**While this market movement is welcome, we need strong policies to stop the widespread use of PFAS chemicals whose entire lifecycle is hazardous to people and the environment.** It is not enough to rely on market forces to ensure that our communities are protected. We must address PFAS in all parts of the supply chain. These bans will help ensure that all manufacturers and retailers are held to the same standard and that their employees and customers are protected. As a committee committed to protecting the health of Minnesotans, we are asking you to heed the call of EPA Administrator Michael Regan when he stated “Every level of government – from local, to state, to Tribal, to federal will need to exercise increased and sustained leadership to truly make progress on PFAS.”

Minnesota has been a national leader in protecting public health and preventing harm by prohibiting other harmful chemicals, such as formaldehyde and bisphenol-A in children’s products. Please continue this leadership by supporting the PFAS Prevention Package by passing HF 2906, HF2907, HF3571 and HF2952 today.

1. “The Madrid Statement on Poly-and Perfluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs),” Environmental Healthy Perspectives Brief Communication, accessed February 21, 2021, https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/pdf/10.1289/ehp.1509934. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
3. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Toxicological Profile for Perfluoroalkyls,* May 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160412019306221 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. https://europepmc.org/article/med/21937271 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. “Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), National Toxicology Program, National Institute of Environmental Health, last updated 8-03-2021, https://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/whatwestudy/topics/pfas/index.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. NHANES, “*Serum Biomarkers of Exposure to Perfluoroalkyl Substances in Relation to Serum Testosterone and Measures of Thyroid Function among Adults and Adolescent”,* 2011-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. Guomao Zheng, et al., “*Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in Breast Milk: Concerning Trends for Current-Use PFAS.*” Environmental Science and Technology, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. Healthy Stuff Lab, Ecology Center, “*What’s Cooking? PFAS and Other Chemical Hazards in Nonstick Cooking and Baking Pans,”*2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20158198/ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. Carlson,Gail, “*Ski wax use contributes to environmental contamination by per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances,”* Chemosphere, December 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. Commission for Environmental Cooperation, *Furthering the Understanding of the Migration of Chemicals from Consumer Products: A Study of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs) in Clothing, Apparel, and Children’s Items,* December 2017.

Healthy Stuff, *Hidden Hazards: Flame Retardants and PFAS in Children’s Car Seats,* December 3, 2018.

Clean & Healthy New York and The Ecology Center, “*The Mattress Still Matters,”* July 21, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. Rappazzo, Coffman, Hines,”*Exposure to Perfluorinated Alkyl Substances and Health Outcomes in Children: A Systematic Review of the Epidemiologic Literature,”* June 27, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)