



February 22, 2021

Dear Chair Liebling and Members of the Health Finance and Policy Committee:

I write to express strong support for HF 79 (Wazlawik). This bipartisan bill takes important steps toward protecting citizens and communities from exposure to toxic PFAS pollution in our state.

Across Minnesota, harmful per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) have affected our drinking water, lakes, fish, and wildlife. Because PFAS are bioaccumulative and highly persistent, they present significant health risks to humans. PFAS are associated with kidney and testicular cancer, liver malfunction, high cholesterol, lower birth weights, decreased immune response to vaccines, and reduced hormone levels.¹

PFAS are of particular concern to women and children. Pregnant women who have been exposed to PFAS pass these toxins directly to their fetuses because PFAS are known to cross the placenta. In addition, PFAS enter breast milk and continue to expose nursing babies of mothers with PFAS exposure.²

The American Academy of Pediatrics has found that children may be particularly susceptible to the effects of compounds such as PFAS because they have higher relative exposures compared with adults (because of greater dietary intake per pound), their metabolic (i.e. detoxification) systems are still developing, and key organ systems are undergoing substantial changes and maturation that are vulnerable to disruption.³

To protect Minnesota's families and communities, it is imperative that Minnesota take action to reduce PFAS exposure by 1) reducing the sources of additional PFAS pollution in our state, and 2) expediting the clean up of already contaminated areas. The clean up of already contaminated areas is not before the Committee today, but I would be happy to discuss clean up issues at another time.

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- 1 Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). 2020. Health Effects of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/health-effects/index.html>
 - 2 Awad, R. et al. 2020. Emerging per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in human milk. *Env. Science: Processes & Impacts*, Issue 10, <https://doi.org/10.1039/D0EM00077A>
 - 3 Trasande, L. et al. 2018. Food Additives and Child Health. *Pediatrics* 142:2, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-1408>

HF 79 addresses the first of these goals by eliminating the ongoing use of PFAS in food packaging. Unfortunately, PFAS are still commonly found in food containers where the water- and grease-resistant properties of PFAS are used to make the packaging stronger. A 2017 study of food packaging in the US found that 46% of food contact papers and 20% of paperboard samples contained PFAS compounds. A 2020 study focused specifically on fast food found that nearly half of tested wrappers and food containers contained PFAS compounds.⁴

In addition to the risk of dietary exposure, food packaging containing PFAS creates problems when it enters the waste stream. When PFAS-contaminated food packaging is sent to a landfill, these highly persistent chemicals end up in the landfill's leachate which then must be treated so it does not contaminate soils or water. Further, fiber-based food packaging treated with PFAS may end up in composting facilities. In 2017, the MPCA conducted a study of compost sites in Minnesota, finding one or more PFAS at concentrations above screening criteria at each and every site sampled.⁵

Food wrappers and packaging are a major component of Minnesota's non-recycled waste stream. While the amount of PFAS-treated food containers is alarming, researchers note that since over half do not contain PFAS, alternatives are clearly available.

Other states have begun to require that manufacturers phase out the use of PFAS in food packaging, including Washington, Maine and New York.⁶ We strongly urge the Legislature to take this common-sense step in Minnesota.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important bipartisan bill and your support of HF 79 is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Nels Paulsen
Policy Director

4 Schaider et al. 2017. Fluorinated Compounds in U.S. Fast Food Packaging. 2017. Environ Sci Technol Lett. 4(3): 105-111, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6104644/>

SCHF, August 2020. Packaged in Pollution, <https://saferchemicals.org/packaged-in-pollution/>

5 MPCA, Composting and PFAS, <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/composting-and-pfas>

6 Maine: <http://legislature.maine.gov/LawMakerWeb/summary.asp?ID=280072805>

New York: <https://legislation.nysenate.gov/pdf/bills/2019/S8817>

Washington: <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/documents/1804034.pdf>