



Maryland

Department of the Environment

Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor

Ben Grumbles, Secretary
Horacio Tablada, Deputy Secretary

February 12, 2020

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: House Bill 619 – Public Safety – Environment - Use of Fire-Fighting Foam Containing Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances - Prohibition

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has reviewed House Bill 619, entitled Public Safety – Fire Fighting Foam and PFAS Chemicals and would like to offer our support.

MDE supports legislation that reduces the release of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) into the environment. PFAS chemicals do not break down easily and will accumulate overtime, and thus have been found to be persistent in the environment and the human body. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) the potential for health effects from PFAS in humans is not well understood. In general, animal studies have found that animals exposed to PFAS at high levels resulted in changes in the function of the liver, thyroid, pancreas and hormone levels. PFOS, PFOA, PFHxS and PFNA have generally been studied more extensively than other PFAS.

As the bill is drafted, the ban of use of firefighting foam with PFAS only applies to firefighter training purposes. However, MDE anticipates that as the supplies of firefighting foam with PFAS is used for actual emergency situations and outreach to firehouse stations regarding the ban of firefighting foam with PFAS for training purposes is conducted, the firehouses will only purchase PFAS-free fighting foam for trainings going forward. This will lead to a further reduction of PFAS being released into the environment.

Thank you for your consideration. We will continue to monitor House Bill 619 during the Committee's deliberations, and I am available to answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to contact me at 410-260-6301 or by e-mail at tyler.abbott@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Abbott", written over a horizontal line.

Tyler Abbott

cc: The Honorable Pat Young