

SENATOR SARAH ELFRETH
Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Education, Business and Administration

Chair, Pensions

Senate Chair

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 11, 2020

Testimony in Favor of SB420 Public Safety - Use of Fire-Fighting Foam and PFAS Chemicals

Chairman Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 420. This bill takes two critical steps related to these hazardous chemicals - it prohibits the use of fire-fighting foam during training purposes that contain PFAs and it directs the Maryland Department of the Environment to conduct a study on the use of PFAs in food packaging in Maryland.

Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl chemicals (PFAs) are highly fluorinated industrial chemicals that have been linked to serious illnesses including; testicular, kidney, liver and pancreatic cancer; reproductive problems; and, low birth weights as well as weakened immunity amongst children¹. Furthermore, these chemicals remain in our bodies for years and rarely break down in the environment - which is why PFAs are often referred to as "forever chemicals."

From Michigan to New Jersey - there are hundreds of instances of PFA contamination nationwide (attached you will find a map of contaminations). Even right here in nearby Chincoteague Island, there is severe suspected contamination because of the use of PFAs at NASA's Wallops Island Flight Test Facility - and there will be a years-long process to determine how much damage was truly caused.

In response to this nationwide crisis, many states are taking action to protect citizens from these chemicals. Several states have enacted lower limits on the PFA amount allowed in water than is currently required by the EPA, Washington and Maine have banned PFAs in food packaging, at least five states have banned the use of fire-fighting foam that contains PFAs, and California is the first state to require utilities to test tap water for PFAS. The Federal Government has also begun the process of addressing this problem by implementing a phase out of PFAs at military bases.

Senate Bill 420 is hopefully the first bill of many to address this issue. I'm proud that this bill has the strong support of the Professional Fire Fighters and the environmental community. I once again respectfully request a favorable report of this bill so we can protect our firefighters, citizens, and the environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sarah Elfreth".

Sarah Elfreth

¹ The Environmental Working Group (<https://www.ewg.org/pfaschemicals/>)