



Maryland

Department of the Environment

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

Ben Grumbles, Secretary
Horacio Tablada, Deputy Secretary

February 11, 2020

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Senate Bill 420 – Public Safety – Fire Fighting Foam and PFAS Chemicals

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has reviewed Senate Bill 420, entitled Public Safety – Fire Fighting Foam and PFAS Chemicals, and would like to offer a letter of support with a suggested amendment.

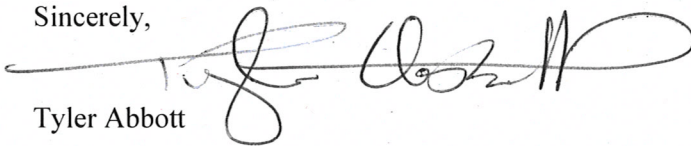
MDE supports legislation that reduces the release of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) into the environment. PFAS chemicals have been found to be persistent in the environment and the human body. Due to this properties of PFAS, these chemicals will not break down easily and will accumulate overtime. According to Center for Disease Control (CDC) the potential for health effects from PFAS in humans is not well understood. PFOS, PFOA, PFHxS and PFNA have generally been studied more extensively than other PFAS. 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.

As the bill is drafted, the ban of the 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. This will lead to a further reduction of PFAS being released into to the environment.

MDE is concerned regarding the study portion of the bill. The Department currently does not have the expertise to conduct the study on PFAS chemical in food packaging to determine if there is an alternative. The Department would need to hire three expert staff at minimum. This study would best be handled by a different agency or conducted at the federal level.

Thank you for your consideration. We will continue to monitor Senate Bill 420 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,



Tyler Abbott

cc: The Honorable Sarah K. Elfreth