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Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Testimony on: SB0195 - Environment – PFAS Chemicals – Prohibitions and Requirements

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: January 28, 2021

Bill Contact: Senators Elfreth and Beidle

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 2500 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep all the members of our communities healthy and safe in a clean environment. DTMG strongly supports SB195 because PFAS “forever” chemicals in food packaging, rugs and carpets, and firefighting foam pollute our environment and are harmful to human health.

PFAS substances are a family of potentially thousands of synthetic perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl chemicals. PFAS are known as “forever chemicals” because they are extremely persistent in the environment and in our bodies. PFAS chemicals have been used extensively in various industries because of their ability to repel oil and water. They can be found in Teflon nonstick products, stains and water repellants, paints, cleaning products, food packaging, and firefighting foams. PFAS chemicals can easily migrate into the air, dust, food, soil and water. People can also be exposed to them through food packaging and industrial exposure.

A growing body of science has shown that PFAS chemicals build up in our bodies and that very small doses of PFAS can cause liver damage, thyroid disease, decreased fertility, high cholesterol, obesity, hormone suppression, and several forms of cancer. Nearly all Americans, including newborn babies, have PFAS in their blood. Studies by the Environmental Working Group found PFAS contamination on at least 11 military bases in Maryland and in several drinking water sources. Several original forms of “long chain” PFAS chemicals were phased out, but recent studies by Auburn University of newer “short chain” replacements show that they may be even more dangerous, supporting scientists’ growing agreement that the entire class of PFAS chemicals is hazardous to human health.

SB0195 will protect all Maryland residents from these dangerous chemicals by prohibiting the use, manufacture, or sale of Class B fire-fighting foam, carpets and rugs, and food packaging that contain PFAS chemicals. In cases where fire-fighting foam containing PFAS is required by federal law, SB0195 will require that its use be documented and that it not be released to the environment through runoff and that it cannot be disposed by any method, such as incineration, landfills, or

other means that could release the PFAS to the environment or contaminate water supplies. Therefore, passage of SB0195 will prevent exposure of Maryland residents for further exposure to PFAS from three of the main sources of PFAS in our lives.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Food and Drug Administration have been slow to act on limiting dangerous PFAS chemicals. Other states have already proposed or enacted limits on PFAS. Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and other states have already proposed or enacted limits on PFAS in drinking water that are significantly lower than the EPA's advisory level. Washington and Maine have banned PFAS in food packaging and at least five states have restricted use of PFAS-based fire-fighting foam. California was the first state to require utilities to test tap water for PFAS and inform their customers.

SB0195 is a sound, science-based approach to limiting exposure of Maryland residents to this dangerous class of chemicals. Therefore, DTMG strongly supports SB0195 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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