

February 9, 2022

SUPPORT HB. 275
Environment -- PFAS chemicals – Prohibitions and Requirements
Testimony of Michael Hansen, Ph.D., Senior Scientist

Delegate Shane Pendergrass,
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Committee members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 275, a bill that would ban intentional use of PFAS in firefighting foam and protective equipment, rugs and carpets, and food packaging. My name is Michael Hansen, Senior Scientist for Consumer Reports.

Consumer Reports is an independent, nonprofit organization - with over 55,000 members in Maryland - that works with consumers for truth, transparency, and fairness in the marketplace through rigorous, independent testing and research. We empower and inform consumers, incentivize corporations to act responsibly, and help policymakers prioritize the rights and interests of consumers in order to shape a truly consumer-driven marketplace.

PFAS are a group of more than 4,700 chemicals that are very widespread and dangerous. PFAS are extremely persistent, resistant to breaking down naturally in the environment and remaining in people's bodies for years. They are also highly mobile, spreading quickly in the environment. This is why they have been described as “forever chemicals” or “everywhere chemicals.” Finally, they can be toxic at very low doses—even at parts per trillion levels or lower, and have been associated with a variety of severe health effects, including cancer and suppression of the immune system making vaccines less effective.

Consumers can be exposed to PFAS through food, water, consumer products that contain PFAS, and contaminated soil, dust and air. Disposal of PFAS can also result in PFAS in drinking water. [CR testing of MD drinking water](#) found total PFAS levels of 26.5 ppt in Rockville and 10.4 ppt in Baltimore, both above CR's recommended limit of [total PFAS of 10 ppt](#).

Some manufacturers add PFAS to food packaging to make it water- and grease-resistant, which can contaminate the food with which it comes into contact. PFAS have been found in a variety of foods purchased around the country, including produce, meats and seafood. People are exposed when they eat contaminated food. There are alternatives to PFAS-treated food ware, and major retailers have already started the switch to these safer alternatives.

PFAS use in rugs and carpets can result in PFAS being present on dust and in indoor air, due to aging and PFAS evaporation leading to higher PFAS levels in toddlers compared to adults both in residential homes and child care environments.

The enactment of HB. 275 would represent significant progress toward protecting consumers from exposure to PFAS through food packaging, rugs and carpets. Maryland could join California, Connecticut, Maine, Minnesota, New York, Vermont and Washington in banning PFAS from food packaging materials. We strongly urge you to support this legislation.

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