



**SB0686**

**PFAS Chemicals - Product Phase Outs and Registration Requirements**

**Testimony before Education, Energy, and the Environment**

**Hearing February 24, 2026**

**Position: Favorable**

Dear Chair Feldman and Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the committee, my name is Shantanu Ghosh, and I am representing Indivisible Howard County on behalf of its 1700+ members. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today **in support of SB0686**, which would prohibit the sale of certain products containing intentionally added per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), establish registration requirements, and provide testing mechanisms to ensure compliance. We thank Senator Love for introducing this bill.

PFAS are often referred to as “forever chemicals” because they persist in the environment and accumulate in the human body. A growing body of scientific research has linked PFAS exposure to increased risks of certain cancers, immune system suppression, thyroid disease, and developmental impacts in children. This is exacerbated by the widespread variety of consumer goods and products containing PFAS - something this bill aims to combat by not only banning the sale, distribution, or offers thereof in this state, of those items, but also establishing a fund to work towards eventual contaminant remediation across Maryland’s natural environment. The long-term costs of contamination are substantial: once these chemicals enter, for instance, groundwater or surface water, removal is technically difficult and extraordinarily expensive. Ultimately, Maryland constituents will have to bear both the immediate financial burden of remediation and the consistent adverse health effects. Preventing contamination at its source is both fiscally responsible and protective of public health, and a cornerstone of SB0686’s proposed fund to assess, avert, and ameliorate PFAS pollution.

This bill also builds upon prior legislation focused on PFAS with respect to firefighting foam. In support of that priority, I’m offering my personal experience as an engineering student, where I collaborated with my local fire department in New Jersey to refine a prototype reconnaissance vehicle intended to assist crews in hazardous environments. In the course of those conversations, I asked firefighters about the risks they face on the job. What surprised me most was learning that some were unaware that their own protective gear contained PFAS-based treatments—substances similar to those found in certain firefighting foams they were deploying. This was in 2015, long before New Jersey enacted PFAS restrictions and regulations in

2024. These firefighters knowingly accepted the dangers of smoke, heat, and structural collapse, but they did not realize they might also face long-term exposure to persistent chemicals embedded in their equipment or released into the environment during foam use. That experience underscores the importance of transparency, accountability, and safer alternatives. SB0686 moves Maryland in that direction by addressing both PFAS in firefighting foam and disclosure requirements for protective equipment, ensuring that those who protect our communities are themselves better protected.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

**We respectfully urge a favorable report.**

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