



**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB686
PFAS Chemicals – Product Phase Outs and Registration Requirements**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 20, 2026

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF SB 686** on behalf of Assateague Coastal Trust.

Assateague Coastal Trust is dedicated to its mission of conservation, preservation, and protection of the waterways of the Lower Eastern Shore. Our work helps ensure that residents and visitors to Maryland's coast forever enjoy the resources of our coastal waters.

Even in remote regions of Maryland's Coastal Bays watershed, PFAS contamination has been detected. These findings make clear that no community is immune.

In 2024 and 2025 Assateague Coastal Trust conducted research alongside University Maryland Eastern Shore to better understand PFAS distribution throughout the Coastal Bays watershed. While our findings found minimal quantities of PFAS, it was notable that even remote regions showed evidence of contamination, highlighting the pervasive nature of PFAS entering our waterways.

The human health risks associated with PFAS exposure are well documented. Scientific research links PFAS exposure to increased risks of certain cancers, immune system suppression, thyroid disease, developmental impacts, and reproductive harm. PFAS can accumulate over time, meaning even low levels of exposure can become dangerous.

For coastal communities that rely heavily on local seafood and drinking water drawn from vulnerable aquifers, this risk is particularly concerning.

Our region's economy depends on healthy waters and safe seafood. PFAS bioaccumulates in aquatic organisms, including species that are central to Maryland's seafood economy, such as blue crabs and oysters. When PFAS enter waterways, they can concentrate in the tissues of these species, posing a risk to people who consume them. Contamination threatens not only public health but also the livelihoods of watermen.

Additionally, legacy PFAS contamination continues to affect communities across the Lower Eastern Shore. Recently, PFAS contamination of ground water was discovered in Salisbury,

highlighting the rapid need for a response to PFAS across the state. These levels were significantly above the EPA's safe drinking water threshold and have triggered an investigation and on-going class-action lawsuit against the parties responsible.

Senate Bill 686 takes meaningful and practical steps to address this growing crisis.

By prohibiting manufacturers from selling, offering for sale, or distributing certain products containing intentionally added PFAS chemicals after specified dates, the bill directly reduces a major source of contamination. Importantly, the bill also establishes product registration requirements and authorizes testing to ensure compliance.

This legislation recognizes that the most effective and cost-efficient way to address PFAS pollution is to prevent it at the source.

Once PFAS contaminates groundwater, soils, and sediments, cleanup is technically challenging and extraordinarily expensive, with the costs often falling on taxpayers rather than manufacturers. Phasing out unnecessary uses of PFAS and requiring disclosure where they remain in use shifts responsibility back to producers and protects communities before contamination occurs.

We believe that this bill takes a meaningful step in addressing an issue that is affecting the health of Maryland's people and the resources we cherish.

Assateague Coastal Trust urges an **FAVORABLE REPORT** on **SB 686**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Taylor Swanson', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Taylor Swanson,
Executive Director and Assateague COASTKEEPER
Assateague Coastal Trust