

Opening Statement  
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change  
Hearing on “Protecting Americans at Risk of PFAS Contamination and Exposure”  
May 15, 2019

PFAS contamination is a very serious issue, affecting communities nationwide. These are persistent chemicals that spread through our water, air, and soil. They are toxic – with studies showing increased cancers, immune impacts, and effects on growth, development, and fertility. And these chemicals are everywhere – in our environment and in our bodies, with new affected communities being discovered all the time.

Although chemical companies have known the hazards of these chemicals for many years, we are still realizing the scope of contamination. It is increasingly clear that we will need to attack PFAS contamination with every tool we have, as quickly as we can.

I want to thank the many members in the House who have introduced legislation to address the PFAS problem.

Representatives Dingell and Upton have worked together to introduce two important bills to address PFAS contamination through the Superfund program.

Representatives Boyle and Fitzpatrick have a bill to set a binding, enforceable and strong drinking water standard for all PFAS.

Representative Soto has introduced a bill to provide industry with a voluntary PFAS-free label for cookware, so consumers can take steps to protect themselves from exposure. Representative Delgado introduced a bill to require reporting of PFAS releases on the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI). TRI reporting provides an essential tool to communities impacted by environmental pollution, and it has a strong record of driving polluters to reduce their releases.

Representative Khanna has introduced a bill to ban incineration of PFAS wastes, including fire-fighting foam. Incineration has been a serious concern for the local communities where it is happening.

Representative Kuster introduced a bill to ban new PFAS chemicals under the Toxic Substances Control Act of TSCA. There are already around 4,700 PFAS chemicals in commerce, and it is astonishing that we continue to approve more of these chemicals given what we now know about them.

Representative Dean has a bill to comprehensively regulate PFAS under TSCA, including a phased-in ban of new and existing PFAS, standards for safe disposal of PFAS, and labeling for articles containing PFAS.

Representative Sean Patrick Maloney has also introduced a bill to address PFAS under TSCA, using EPA's authorities under that law to require health effects testing and reporting on all PFAS chemicals.

Representative Stevens has a bill to list all PFAS as hazardous air pollutants under the Clean Air Act. This bill responds to increasing evidence that air emissions of PFAS are dangerous and avoidable.

Representative Fletcher has legislation requiring EPA to issue guidance for first responders to minimize the use of PFAS firefighting foam and cut the risks they face from that foam. We heard from the International Association of Firefighters in March about the fear among firefighters about how these chemicals are affecting their health. We must address these fears.

Representative Rouda introduced a bill to establish a trust fund, financed by user fees from PFAS manufacturers. These funds will help pay the ongoing operations and maintenance costs of drinking water utilities and water treatment works that are paying to clean up PFAS contamination.

And finally, I introduced the Providing Financial Assistance for Safe Drinking Water Act. This bill offers significant federal investment to help water utilities pay the capital costs needed to adopt treatment techniques that can remove PFAS from drinking water. These treatment techniques are very expensive and may be beyond what is affordable for many affected communities.

I have described 13 bills, but there are more being introduced every day. These bills are all important, and all address a different aspect of the PFAS problem.

Many people think of PFAS as solely a drinking water issue. But all the PFAS in our drinking water came from industrial activity. They will keep showing up in our drinking water sources if we continue to produce and use thousands of different PFAS chemicals. We need to stop PFAS pollution at the source, contain the pollution before it spreads further, and get it out of our air, soil and drinking water. We have no time to waste.

I look forward to working together, quickly, to address PFAS contamination and implement some of the solutions we will hear about today.

Thank you, I yield back.