



Testimony of Deanna White to the House Commerce Finance and Policy Committee

March 2, 2022

Good afternoon, Chair Stephenson and members of the committee,

My name is Deanna White and I am the State Director of Clean Water Action. I also serve as the Director of the Healthy Legacy Coalition – a health-based coalition focused on ensuring that consumer products – especially those for children – are made without the use of toxic chemicals.

The Healthy Legacy Coalition joins with Clean Water Action and its more than 50,000 members across Minnesota in support of HF 3571. This bill is part of a larger PFAS Prevention Package that aims to stop the use of PFAS in a wide array of products.

**PFAS are a class of chemicals in need of immediate action based on their threat to human health and widespread and costly pollution in our environment.** Research at the CDC links PFAS to a variety of health concerns including decreased fertility, liver damage, and increased risk of asthma.<sup>i</sup> Despite industry claims, the newer generation of PFAS chemicals shouldn't be considered safe. Studies by the National Institute of Environmental Health revealed that seven current-use PFAS induced similar toxicity as their phased-out counterparts.<sup>ii</sup>

PFAS are known as “forever chemicals” because they are virtually indestructible and last a long time in the environment – leaving a dangerous and expensive mess for us all. Eliminating non-essential uses of PFAS was identified as a key opportunity to prevent pollution in “Minnesota’s PFAS Blueprint”. It is not enough to go formulation by formulation, the common traits they all share make it clear that they must be considered as a whole class. We hope that the committee will agree that preventing PFAS pollution should be a top priority for the legislature.

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The bill before the committee prohibits PFAS in juvenile products – items that children come in close contact with. *Children should not be exposed to hazardous chemicals where they eat, sleep, and play.* Yet product testing has found PFAS in a variety of products for infants and kids under 12 years of age. The products in which PFAS was detected include baby bibs, car seats, and mattresses.<sup>iii</sup>

Children are more vulnerable to health impacts from chemicals because low levels of exposure can disrupt key stages of development. PFAS in particular is especially harmful to children. A review of 64 health studies found positive associations between childhood exposure to PFAS and asthma, high cholesterol, and reduced kidney function.<sup>iv</sup> It is not fair to expect already overburdened parents to have to conduct research projects for every product they buy. Children deserve to be protected and parents deserve to know that they can trust the products that they buy for their children to be safe. Some manufacturers are making products without PFAS, but it can be difficult to know for sure and there are not always affordable options available.

**While this market movement is welcome, we need strong policies to stop the widespread use of PFAS chemicals whose entire lifecycle is hazardous to people and the environment.** It is not enough to rely on market forces to ensure that our communities are protected. We must address PFAS in all parts of the supply chain. These bans will help ensure that all manufacturers and retailers are held to the same standard and that their employees and customers are protected.

When PFAS containing products are used and disposed of, PFAS can migrate out of these products into the environment, including groundwater, and sewage sludge. As a result of the widespread use of PFAS, more and more communities are being forced to address PFAS contamination in their drinking water sources.

The difficulty and expense in treating PFAS contamination is an unfair burden on taxpayers and water systems. We know that a growing number of Americans are drinking water containing PFAS and that is not an acceptable cost of doing business.

The public has been warned about the dangers of PFAS for years. In 2015, over 200 scientific experts raised the alarm on PFAS.<sup>v</sup> The experts' concerns were so significant they recommended PFAS should only be used for essential purposes given their known health and environmental hazards. Responsible companies have heeded this warning by ending their use of PFAS. But we must ensure that **all** companies do the right thing and these bills are an important step in helping businesses clean up their supply chain and stop PFAS contamination.

Although there has been limited action on PFAS from the EPA in recent months, States continue leading the way on PFAS pollution prevention. Over 30 states across the country are taking action to permanently close the door on the non-essential use of PFAS in products. We are asking the state of Minnesota to heed the call of EPA Administrator Michael Regan when he stated "Every level of government – from local, to state, to Tribal, to federal will need to exercise increased and sustained leadership to truly make progress on PFAS."

Minnesota has been a national leader in prohibiting other harmful chemicals, such as formaldehyde and bisphenol-A in children's products. Businesses have continued to thrive and prosper with these regulations in place and consumers can breathe easier knowing that they are protected. They deserve that same protection from PFAS chemicals. Please continue Minnesota's leadership by supporting the PFAS Prevention Package and passing HF 3571.

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<sup>i</sup> Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Toxicological Profile for Perfluoroalkyls*, May 2021.

<sup>ii</sup> "Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), National Toxicology Program, National Institute of Environmental Health, last updated 8-03-2021, <https://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/whatwestudy/topics/pfas/index.html>.

<sup>iii</sup> Commission for Environmental Cooperation, *Furthering the Understanding of the Migration of Chemicals from Consumer Products: A Study of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs) in Clothing, Apparel, and Children's Items*, December 2017. Healthy Stuff, *Hidden Hazards: Flame Retardants and PFAS in Children's Car Seats*, December 3, 2018. Clean & Healthy New York and The Ecology Center, "The Mattress Still Matters," July 21, 2020.

<sup>iv</sup> Rappazzo, Coffman, Hines, "Exposure to Perfluorinated Alkyl Substances and Health Outcomes in Children: A Systematic Review of the Epidemiologic Literature," June 27, 2017.

<sup>v</sup> Blum, et al. "The Madrid Statement on Poly- and Perfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), May 1, 2015.