



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

February 23, 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 of organizations 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 three bills before you today- HF 2906, HF 2907, and HF 2952. These bills are part of a larger PFAS Prevention Package that aims to stop the non-essential 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 consumer health and widespread and costly pollution in our environment. A 2015 consensus statement by over 200 experts raised serious concerns about PFAS.ⁱ The experts' concerns were so significant they recommended PFAS should only be used for essential purposes given their known health and environmental hazards.

PFAS are also known as “forever chemicals” because they are virtually indestructible and last a long time in the environment. Eliminating non-essential uses of PFAS was identified as a key opportunity to prevent pollution in “Minnesota’s PFAS Blueprint”. We hope that the committee will agree that preventing costly PFAS pollution should be a top priority for the legislature.

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Consumers do not want products containing hazardous chemicals. When the largest ski and snowboard association in the U.S. learned about the hazards of PFAS ski wax, they swiftly banned PFAS wax at their events. Similar action was recently taken by the organizers of the American Birkebeiner international ski race, held just over the border in Wisconsin. Now skiers cannot compete in the race with PFAS ski wax. While these actions are commendable, recreational associations and race organizers shouldn't have to be responsible for the safety of products, yet they are having to take action because irresponsible businesses are not.

Buyers for large institutions, such as the health care industry, have instituted purchasing policies which prohibit products with hazardous chemicals, including PFAS. In 2019, U.S. hospitals spent \$121 million dollars on furniture and furnishings that avoid target chemicals of concern.ⁱⁱ Here in Minnesota, the state's procurement program prohibits office furniture with PFAS and other hazardous chemicals.ⁱⁱⁱ

National retailers, such as Walmart and Target, have enacted comprehensive policies to address chemicals of concern in their supply chains. In regards to PFAS, Minnesota based Target enacted policies to eliminate their use in major product categories. For example, Target has successfully removed PFAS from their Target brand apparel products and they have a goal to eliminate PFAS from their store brand textiles this year.^{iv} **But businesses and institutions need strong policies in place to make it easier for them to do the right thing.**

Attached to this testimony is a document from the American Sustainable Business Council -- a coalition of business organizations and companies advancing market solutions and public policies to support a sustainable economy. "The Business Case for Eliminating PFAS Chemicals from Consumer Products" clearly lays out support from a business perspective for the regulation of PFAS chemicals.

The bills before the committee prohibit PFAS in three different product categories- cosmetics, cookware, and ski wax. One commonality all these products share is they can be made without PFAS:

- Cosmetics - A growing number retailers and manufacturers offer cosmetic and personal care products without PFAS. National retailers whose store brand product lines are PFAS-free include Sephora, H&M, and Whole Foods Market.^v
- Cookware - Consumers also have a variety of PFAS-free cookware options currently on the market. Nonstick cookware options include classic cast iron and newer nonstick cookware lines from companies such as Always Pan, Greenlife, Caraway, and GreenPan.^{vi}
- Ski Wax - In response to PFAS bans by the International Ski Federation and other major ski races, leading ski wax companies have developed PFAS free-waxes. The website of the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association lists ten companies that currently offer PFAS-free ski wax products.

While this market movement is welcome, states across the country are taking action to permanently close the door on the non-essential use of PFAS in products. Policy action also supports fair competition. *By prohibiting PFAS, businesses that make, distribute, and sell PFAS-free products can fairly compete with businesses who do not factor in the health and environmental impacts of their 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. These laws have protected generations of Minnesota’s children and businesses have successfully adapted by transitioning to safer products. Please continue this leadership by supporting the PFAS Prevention Package and pass HF 2906, HF2907, and HF2952 today.

ⁱ “The Madrid Statement on Poly-and Perfluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs),” Environmental Healthy Perspectives Brief Communication, accessed February 21, 2021, <https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/pdf/10.1289/ehp.1509934>.

ⁱⁱ “2019 Sustainability Data,” Practice Greenhealth, accessed February 21, 2021, <https://practicegreenhealth.org/tools-and-resources/2019-sustainability-data>.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Building and Facility: State Contract Specifications,” Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, accessed February 21, 2022, <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/building-and-facility>.

^{iv} “Target: Retailer Report Card – Action Explanation of Points,” Mind the Store, accessed February 21, 2022, <https://retailerreportcard.com/retailer/target/>.

^v “PFAS-Free Products,” PFAS Central – A Project of Green Science Policy, accessed February 21, 2022, <https://pfascentral.org/pfas-free-products/>.

^{vi} “PFAS-Free Products,” PFAS Central – A Project of Green Science Policy, accessed February 21, 2022, <https://pfascentral.org/pfas-free-products/>.