CLEAN WATER ACTION

301 4th Ave S Suite365N, Minneapolis, MN 55415
Phone 612-623-3666
www.CleanWaterAction.org/MN

Testimony of Deanna White to the House Commerce Committee March 2, 2021

Good afternoon Mr. Chair 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 more than 30 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 HF 79.

Per and poly fluoroalkyl substances, known as PFAS, are a class of man-made chemicals used to create a grease- and water-resistant barrier on many types of food packaging. The coatings on paper, cardboard, and molded fiber food packaging are an ongoing source of persistent PFAS; they can leach from packaging into food and then our bodies, and **do not break down** once they enter our waste stream.

While some will suggest that newer "short chain" PFAS are safer than the original "long chain" variety, there is growing evidence that these newly formulated PFAS have similar health concerns to the older formulations. According to scientific research, PFAS have been found in 97% of human blood samples[1]. These chemicals are passed onto the womb; newborn babies are born with these industrial contaminants now[2]. PFAS chemicals have been linked to kidney[3] and testicular[4] cancer, liver malfunction[5], thyroid disease[6], delayed puberty[7], early menopause in women[8], reduced immune response in children[9], and elevated cholesterol[10]. A recent analysis of birth outcomes in Oakdale from 2002-2011 found average birth weight and gestational age were significantly lower before water filtration was added to remove PFAS from the municipal water supply[11].

Not only have PFAS been contaminating our bodies, they are highly persistent in our environment where they have gained notoriety as "forever chemicals" that will bind to soil and prove costly to remove from drinking water sources. There are **huge costs** associated with PFAS; if we do not address these chemicals before they enter our waste stream, we will pay a lot more later in health care costs and environmental remediation. Earlier this year, the Wisconsin DNR issued an advisory for smelt consumption in the Great Lakes, including Lake Superior, due to PFAS contamination This type of advisory threatens many who rely on subsistence gathering including our indigenous populations.

There is broad agreement that PFAS in food packaging is a bad idea. In January, McDonald's made a commitment to phasing out PFAS worldwide in their food packaging by 2025. Trader Joe's, Whole Foods Market, and other grocery chains have taken steps to remove PFAS from their food packaging. Though these businesses are taking positive steps, the problem is still vast, and growing worse **and requires a policy like the one proposed in this bill to ensure that we are truly protected.**

It is especially challenging for those who receive our waste. Recent conversations with Minnesota composters indicate staggering costs of up to $7,500 per day in increased

operating costs due to PFAS contamination. One composting site, in Blue Earth County near Good Thunder, was forced to shut down due to inability to adequately reduce contamination in water leaving their facility. The presence of PFAS also presents expensive challenges to water treatment facilities, who are left to figure out how to remove the chemicals to keep drinking water safe.

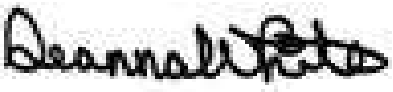
In Minnesota, we restricted PFAS in firefighting foam because evidence is clear that use over time has contaminated drinking water in communities like Bemidji, for instance.

Now is the time to take additional steps to stop adding to the contamination of our bodies and our water.

Several State Legislatures around the country are now working to eliminate these chemicals due to the health risks associated with exposure to PFAS. These chemicals do not belong in our bodies and they do not belong in our food packaging. We urge the committee to support this bill and help Minnesota join other states in prohibiting PFAS from being used in food packaging.

In order to protect the health of Minnesotans and safeguard taxpayers from prohibitive future costs, we urge you to pass HF 79 today.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Deanna White
Director, Clean Water Action Minnesota

1 – Serum Biomarkers of Exposure to Perfluoroalkyl Substances in Relation to Serum Testosterone and Measures of Thyroid Function among Adults and Adolescents from NHANES 2011-12
2 – Characterization of Human Exposure Pathways to Perfluorinated Compounds – Comparing Exposure Estimates with Biomarkers of Exposure
3 & 4 – Perfluorooctanoic Acid Exposure and Cancer Outcomes in a Contaminated Community: A Geographic Analysis
5 – Serum Perfluorooctanoate (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane Sulfonate(PFOS) Concentrations and Liver Function Biomarkers in a Population with Elevated PFOA Exposure
6 – Thyroid Function and Perfluoroalkyl Acids in Children Living near a Chemical Plant
7 – Association of Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS) with age of puberty Among Children Living near a Chemical Plant
8 – Implications of Early Menopause in Women Exposed to Perfluorocarbons
9 – Serum Vaccine Antibody Concentrations in Children Exposed to Perfluorinated Compounds.
10 – Exposure to Polyfluoroalkyl Chemicals and Cholesterol, Body Weight, and Insulin Resistance in the General US Population
11 - Reducing exposure to high levels of perfluorinated compounds in drinking water improves reproductive

outcomes: evidence from an intervention in Minnesota