



***Mission:** To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy **Vision:** Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities*

SB 273 – Environment – PFAS Chemicals – Prohibitions and Requirements (George “Walter” Taylor Act)

Hearing Date: 2/2/2022

Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: SUPPORT

Chairperson Pinsky and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee: The Maryland Public Health Association would like to express support for SB 273, sponsored by Senator Elfreth. This bill will restrict the use and disposal of PFAS chemicals in Maryland.

In 2016, the American Public Health Association (APHA) published the policy statement, [Reducing Human Exposure to Highly Fluorinated Chemicals to Protect Public Health.](#)”

“All PFASs share problematic properties with legacy long-chain PFOA and PFOS and could be considered ‘regrettable substitutions.’ Manufacturers and purchasers should instead select non-PFAS technologies whenever possible.”

The policy statement also details several health outcomes linked with exposure to chemicals in the PFAS category including high cholesterol, ulcerative colitis, developmental toxicity, thyroid disease, testicular and kidney cancers, and pregnancy-related hypertension.

SB 273 stops the use of PFAS in:

- Firefighting foam
- Food packaging
- Rugs and carpets.
- Requires notification for PFAS in firefighting gear.
- Prevents the mass disposal of PFAS chemicals by incineration and landfilling.

These measures will make significant progress in limiting exposures of PFAS to Marylanders.

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) found PFAS in [75% of the drinking water it has tested](#). The APHA statement discusses drinking water contamination: “PFAS

contamination exceeds the EPA's advisory level in the drinking water of an estimated 6 million, and likely many more, American residents. Drinking water contamination has been linked to firefighting foams used at military sites and airports, industrial sites (including PFAS manufacturers and companies that use PFASs in their products), and wastewater treatment plants. Such sources of contamination are often located in low-income communities, in some cases with few environmental controls, which creates an environmental justice issue." Eliminating PFAS in firefighting foams that this bill establishes will reduce drinking water contamination. This provision will also be a protective step for firefighters, whose leading cause of death is cancer.

The provisions in this bill will also protect another population of concern, children, through the elimination of PFAS in rugs and carpets. Young children crawl on and inhale dust from carpets, and because of their increased inhalation rates, children often ingest disproportionately higher doses of PFASs than adults, which can have detrimental impacts on their developing organ systems.

As a state, it is our duty to ensure the strongest protections against toxic exposures across the entire population where we live, work, and play. One of the strongest interventions we can take to prevent environmentally caused diseases like cancer are preventing or eliminating exposures to contaminants. Ten states have already taken strong action to stop using PFAS in food packaging, rugs and carpets, or firefighting foam. It is time for Maryland to join them.

Thank you for your consideration. We urge a favorable report on SB 273.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.