



**Committee:** Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**Testimony on:** SB273 PFAS Chemicals-Prohibitions and Requirements (George “Walter” Taylor Act)

**Organization:** Greenbelt Climate Action Network

**Submitting:** Maureen Fine

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** Wed, Feb 2, 2022

Dear Chairman and Committee Members:

The Greenbelt Climate Action Network (GCAN) is writing in support of SB273 PFAS Chemicals-Prohibitions and Requirements (George “Walter” Taylor Act).

GCAN's mission is to educate residents about climate change, “systemic” solutions, how they can change their behaviors to be more sustainable, and take personal, local, systemic, and political action.

Per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) have terrifying health effects, including liver damage, immune system damage, low infant birth rate, and even cancer. 95% of Americans have measurable concentrations of these “forever chemicals” in their blood. While we’re all exposed to some degree, those most at risk from being harmed by PFAS are communities of color and low-income communities. The Union of Concerned Scientists notes that these communities “bear the economic and biological burden” of the government’s lack of responsiveness to concerns about this toxic class of chemicals. Getting PFAS chemicals out of products would be a first step to decreasing exposure.

PFAS chemicals are everywhere, and they are really bad for us. Since Climate Change affects all issues, Climate Change could make the PFAS crisis even worse. Floods and hurricanes spread contaminants. Increased forest fires increase the use of PFAS containing fire fighting foam. According to Risk and Insurance, storms spurred by Climate Change could move PFAS around the globe. They also add that PFAS exposure is setting up to be the next asbestos in terms of liability.

So not only are people putting toxic chemicals directly into their bodies when they eat food from PFAS-coated wrappers, especially hot and greasy foods like french fries, which make it more likely PFAS will be transferred from the wrapper to the food they consumed. But data from the Environmental Protection Agency has revealed that PFAS chemicals are contributing to the climate crisis as their production involves the emission of potent greenhouse gasses. According to Toxic Free Future, PFAS utilized in the manufacture of food packaging leads to the release of GHGs, specifically HCFC-21, or R 22. HCFC-22 emissions are banned worldwide under the Montreal Protocol, a 1987 international environmental treaty, because the chemical is so destructive to the ozone layer. An article in The Guardian says “The plant of the PFAS manufacturer Daikin in Decatur, Alabama, released about 240,000

pounds of HCFC-22 in 2019 – the equivalent of more than 1bn pounds of carbon dioxide, or what would be released from driving 125,000 cars every day for a year. Many of the nation’s top 50 HCFC-22 polluters are ‘forever chemical’ manufacturers. A loophole in the Montreal treaty allows companies to release HCFC-22 when it’s used as an intermediate in production of another chemical, such as PFAS.”

The Maryland Department of the Environment found PFAS in 75% of the drinking water it tested. We also know of contamination in and around more than a dozen military sites in the state and in some seafood. Anglers who fish Piscataway Creek off the Potomac River have been warned **to limit their consumption of what they catch** after Maryland regulators discovered elevated levels of PFAS in fish downstream of Joint Base Andrews. And we know this is just the tip of the iceberg.

We hope Maryland will join 10 other states in taking clear action to restrict PFAS, and that in the future, you will build on this first step by restricting disposal of PFAS chemicals in Maryland. The Greenbelt Climate Action Network recommends a FAVORABLE report for SB273, the George “Walter” Taylor Act.

Sincerely,  
Maureen Fine-Volunteer  
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