

SB0273: Environment – PFAS Chemicals – Prohibitions and Requirements  
(George “Walter” Taylor Act)  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
February 2nd, 2022  
Brent Walls, Potomac Riverkeeper Network

**FAVORABLE**

***Potomac Riverkeeper Network:** Our mission is to protect the public’s right to clean water in the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers and their tributaries. We stop pollution to enhance the safety of our drinking water, protect healthy river habitats, and enhance public use and enjoyment.*

**Potomac Riverkeeper Network support SB0273 to restrict the use and disposal of products that contain PFAS compounds.** PFAS is a class of over 9000 chemical compounds that are considered “forever” compounds because they do not break down easily. In the last decade, an increasing number of independent research has identified hazards of PFAS contamination to our health. Unfortunately, EPA has yet to fully acknowledge the toxicity of all PFAS chemicals to humans nor has EPA issued toxicity standards; therefore, it is left up to the States to protect its citizens from exposure of PFAS pollutants. SB0273 is a necessary first step in our fight against this new public health risk.

**Stop the cycle of PFAS contamination.**

PFAS compounds have been around since the 1950’s. Two particular PFAS pollutants, PFOA and PFOS, were found to be [toxic to humans](#) by the 1970s according to researchers at 3M and later by Dupont. These two compounds (PFOA/PFOS) have been put into products that citizens across the world use and therefore have polluting our environment and poisoning our bodies. The Federal government has known about the toxic nature of PFAS chemicals since 1998 and yet we still do not have adequate protections for the people of this nation. The CDC and [The Agency of Toxic Substances and Disease Registry](#) have identified four routes of PFAS exposure to our bodies: eating and drinking foods with PFAS, breathing in dust from products with PFAS and applying beauty products to the skin. SB0273 begins to stop the PFAS pollution cycle.

- PFAS in products that we use everyday flow through our bodies and washed down the drain into public sewer systems.
- The wastewater treatment plants do not have the ability to filter out PFAS and therefore discharge into rivers and streams throughout Maryland. [Sample results](#) collected by Upper Potomac Riverkeeper of wastewater treatment plants in Washington County showed high levels of PFAS with no obvious industrial source.
- The PFAS cycle continues with public water supplies using surface water polluted by PFAS as a public source of drinking water, where PFAS is not filtered out.
- The cycle continues with low-income families keeping fish caught out of Maryland streams that are polluted with PFAS to feed their families. In October 2021, MDE released a press release about a fish [consumption advisory for Piscataway Creek](#) in Prince George’s County because of PFAS pollution.
- The PFAS contamination continues with biosolids from those same wastewater plants containing concentrated PFAS pollutants to be used as fertilizer on our crops for human consumption or to feed our livestock that eventually pollutants our bodies.

### **Why is this bill needed?**

It is up to the States to pass laws that will begin to protect people from more PFAS poisoning.

- The prices of food at the grocery store have been increasing more than many families can afford and the use of fast food to feed families has grown exponentially. The food wrappers from fast food chains are just one example of how PFAS is impacting families. Our children are at greater risk of building up higher levels of PFAS in their blood; which can complicate their health as they get older, all because they will be exposed to food packaging with PFAS throughout their childhood.
- We all love the idea of stain resistant carpets and rugs so that we can clean those messes up. And we love that clean carpeted area where our children and grandchildren can play at such young ages. But the dust from those stain resistant carpet products are loaded with PFAS and breathed in by families unknowingly adding to the PFAS pollution in their system.
- Firefighters and other [first responders in Maryland](#) do not need another reason to be concern about the health and safety of their job. It is already harmful enough to be in the presence of burning buildings and chemicals from cars and planes to also be poisoned by a product that is used frequently for difficult fires.
- When PFAS chemicals are incinerated, they pollute the air of surrounding communities because PFAS is not destroyed by burning.
- When PFAS chemicals are landfilled, they can leach into our groundwater, putting our drinking water further at risk.

### **What does this bill do?**

- Stops the use of firefighting foam or AFFF containing PFAS
- Stops the use of food packaging products that contain PFAS
- Stops the use of rugs and carpets that have PFAS in the product.
- Protects our air and water from the mass disposal of these products by incineration or landfill.

Bill SB0273 is the first step for Maryland in stopping the cycle of PFAS contamination and one step closer to better health for Maryland citizens.

### **Potomac Riverkeeper Network urges a favorable report.**

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Upper Potomac Riverkeeper