

## **House Consumer Protection, Technology & Utilities Committee**

*09/23/2025, 10:00 a.m., Room G-50, Irvis Office Building*

Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee held an informational meeting to discuss the dangers of polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAs) in consumer products and legislative solutions.

Chairman Danilo Burgos (D-Philadelphia) emphasized the importance of addressing the impact of forever chemicals, known as PFAs, on consumer health and the environment. He stated the goal of the informational meeting was to evaluate policy and regulatory solutions to protect public health and hold polluters accountable. Chairman Burgos mentioned the meeting would include discussions with experts to find science-based solutions.

Rep. Greg Scott (D-Montgomery) spoke about the dangers of PFAs, a group of over 9,000 human-made chemicals, highlighting their environmental and health risks. He stressed they can lead to reproductive harm, developmental delays and “disruption of hormonal functions.” Rep. Scott expressed commitment to creating legislation to ban PFAs in industrial applications, with exceptions for essential uses. He highlighted his upcoming legislation regarding PFAs and acknowledged bipartisan support for this initiative, especially noting the impact on the fire service community.

Ian Louda, legislative coordinator, Clean Water Action (CWA), testified on the dangers of PFA chemicals in Pennsylvania. He praised recent state action, such as setting drinking water standards and banning PFAs in firefighting foam but mentioned the steps “aren’t enough.” Louda specified studies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and University of Notre Dame and warned of links between PFAs exposure and “immune system suppression, liver damage and increased risk of cancer.” He additionally highlighted findings that menstrual products and cosmetics often contain high PFA levels. Louda argued that companies have “known for decades” of PFA dangers but have “turned a blind eye” while continuing to sell contaminated products. He urged lawmakers to pass legislation prohibiting the sale of juvenile products, menstrual products, cosmetics and dental floss with intentionally added PFAs to “further protect the health and safety of Pennsylvania families.”

Stephanie Wein, clean water and conservation advocate, PennEnvironment, discussed the harmful presence of PFAs. She noted they are “nearly indestructible” and build up in the environment and human bodies. Wein emphasized how PFA exposure is linked to kidney cancer, thyroid disruption, reproductive issues, immune suppression and developmental harm. She warned that babies and young children are especially vulnerable, mentioning significant PFA findings in diapers, infant bedding and clothing. Wein added that “babies have thin and permeable skin,” which absorbs chemicals more readily. She also raised concerns about PFAs in everyday products like dental floss and cosmetics and said these are often applied “to the most absorptive parts of the body.” Wein urged lawmakers to support bipartisan legislation phasing PFAs out of “baby products, menstrual products, cosmetics and dental floss.” She stressed, “We should be able to trust what we go to buy from the store.”

Katie Blume, political and legislative director, Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania (CVPA), emphasized the importance of addressing PFAs due to their impact on children’s and families’ health. She stressed PFAs can “directly” impact the safety and health of developing children.

Blume said PFAs are found in a wide range of consumer products, including screen protectors on cell phones, which can “degrade and become dust on the floor of your home.” Blume noted that not all families can afford safer alternatives, especially in rural communities where natural products are not as readily available. She praised legislative efforts to address PFAs, including HB 1116, which calls for more biosolid testing, HB 1415 for increased public water testing and SB 611 advocating for PFAs to be classified as a hazardous substance. Blume mentioned Minnesota’s Amara’s Law as a model for banning non-essential uses of PFAs and requiring product disclosure.

Melanie Benesh, vice president, government affairs, Environmental Working Group (EWG), testified in support of Pennsylvania legislation to phase out PFAs in consumer products. She stressed that “none of us consented to be contaminated with toxic chemicals” and noted 99% of Americans, including newborns, now carry PFAs in their blood. Benesh argued that while PFAs are pervasive in the environment, “we can significantly reduce our exposure by eliminating some of these needless uses” in items like cosmetics, dental floss, juvenile products and menstrual products. She pointed out PFAs are often unnecessary when creating consumer products and mentioned that many companies already offer PFA-free alternatives. She highlighted how PFA contamination has been detected in the drinking water of 247 Pennsylvania communities and at 18 military sites. Benesh said state action is urgent because “consumers cannot simply shop around the problem,” and federal action may lag. Benesh stated that at least 10 states have enacted PFA bans.

Rep. Mary Isaacson (D-Philadelphia) emphasized the need for legislation to protect Pennsylvania’s residents from PFAs in products like makeup and menstrual products. She highlighted the disproportionate exposure of women and children to these chemicals and asked about federal movement regarding the notification of PFAs in products. Benesh explained the lack of federal warning requirements for PFAs in products and the limited legislation targeting PFAs in food packaging. She noted the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) lack of priority on PFAs in cosmetics due to the small size and understaffing of its personal care product office. Benesh explained that state actions have been more influential in addressing PFAs in consumer products. Wein emphasized the importance of legislation addressing the entire class of chemicals rather than only addressing perfluorooctanoic acids (PFOAs) or perfluorooctane sulfonates (PFOS).

Rep. Rob Kauffman (R-Franklin) asked why corporations use PFAs in their products and if the decision is based on economic factors. He also inquired about the price difference of products that have been reformulated to exclude PFAs and if there is a difference in pricing for basic needs between Maine, which has banned PFAs, and Pennsylvania. Benesh explained that PFAs are used in consumer products for their functional properties, like stain resistance and heat resistance. She mentioned a historical knowledge gap about the health risks associated with PFAs and highlighted that there has not been a noticeable price differential observed in states with reformulated products. Benesh discussed the availability of cost-effective substitutes for PFAs and mentioned a study on food packaging that found no significant cost difference between wrappers with and without PFAs. Rep. Kauffman reflected on becoming more health-conscious and acknowledged the importance of considering health impacts in regulatory decisions.

Minority Chairman Carl Metzgar (R-Somerset) outlined challenges in drafting effective legislation on PFAs, including navigating the federal Commerce Clause, preventing the offshoring of production and protecting small businesses from high liability. He emphasized the need for expert

assistance to create a viable bill. Wein acknowledged recent efforts to incentivize American manufacturing. She stated she sees “no reason why” American companies wouldn’t be able to achieve creating PFA-free products and noted several smaller domestic companies have already begun the process. Rep. Scott discussed the importance of incentivizing American manufacturers to produce safer products, specifically PFA-free firefighting gear, despite the higher costs, to ensure product safety. Benesh explained that Rep. Scott’s proposed bill aligns with the Commerce Clause regarding its approach to downstream liability and enforcement. She emphasized how manufacturers are responsible for certifying their products as PFA-free and that downstream users would not be penalized based on manufacturers’ compliance certificates.

Steve Kratz, president, Pennsylvania Chemical Industry Council (PCIC), highlighted the state’s chemical and plastics industries provide “nearly 100,000 direct and related jobs” and contribute over \$14 billion to Pennsylvania’s economy. He emphasized PFA chemistries are “critical for responding to extreme temperature changes” and are essential in products like medical devices, electronics, refrigeration and military equipment. Kratz cautioned lawmakers against a broad ban, saying it is “critical to include an accurate science-based definition of PFAs” and to focus only on intentionally added chemicals of concern. He urged a balanced approach that distinguishes between harmful compounds and durable, stable uses, stressing that the industry “fully supports the safe management of chemicals, including PFAs.”

Robert Simon, vice president, Chemical Products and Technology Divisions (CPTD), American Chemistry Council (ACC), expressed support for regulating specific PFAs and their end uses, mentioning the industry’s efforts to phase out harmful PFAs and the challenges of broad PFAs regulations. He said it is “not scientifically accurate” to treat all PFAs the same, noting that regulation should distinguish between products like makeup and “an FDA-approved medical product.” Simon emphasized there are efforts in place to phase out the legacy PFAs most linked to health risks, investing “over a billion dollars to develop the replacement chemistries” under a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stewardship program. He urged Pennsylvania to follow the majority of states that have taken a “focused approach” rather than broad bans like Maine and Minnesota, which he said have “struggled” with implementation.

Rep. Isaacson inquired about the industry’s support for regulating products that come into direct contact with the skin, emphasizing the importance of safety in products absorbed by humans, particularly concerning women and children. Kratz agreed with Rep. Isaacson’s concerns about regulating PFAs in products absorbed by humans. He highlighted the need for careful consideration in defining which products are included in regulations to avoid unintended safety risks. Simon supported regulation to prevent chemicals like PFOs and PFOAs from being used in products with high potential for human exposure. He specified Washington State’s decision to use fluoropolymer in wiring insulation as an example of thoughtful regulation.

Rep. Joseph Hohenstein (D-Philadelphia) highlighted the challenge of regulating chemicals like PFAs due to proprietary concerns and patents. He explained parallels between controlled substances under criminal law and chemical regulations. Rep. Hohenstein emphasized the risks PFAs pose, especially to vulnerable groups, and sought comments on overcoming obstacles related to proprietary information and on addressing PFAs contamination beyond environmental concerns. Simon emphasized the importance of distinguishing between different types of PFAs and including chemicals of concern in regulations regardless of their proprietary status. He noted that 683 PFAs are registered under the federal Environmental Protection Act and advocated for

recognizing clear subcategories of PFAs. Simon suggested that chemicals meeting safety criteria should be treated differently. Kratz mentioned the industry's focus on increasing recycling rates as well as investments in recycling infrastructure and remanufacturing used plastics to prevent these materials from ending up in landfills and the environment. He acknowledged the need for further discussion on the topic.

Chairman Metzgar acknowledged the common ground shared among participants and highlighted the importance of reaching an agreement on the definition of chemicals to move forward effectively.

Chairman Burgos expressed hope for a better future, acknowledging the industry and advocates' recognition of past mistakes and their willingness to cooperate before adjourning the hearing.