



May 20, 2020

Dear Senator,

Vermont firefighters, business groups, educators, public health and children's advocates, and environmental groups, urge you to **vote to support S.295** to ban PFAS and other toxic chemicals from consumer products.

PFAS chemicals are linked to harmful health impacts including high blood pressure, thyroid disease, kidney and testicular cancers, and suppressed immune system function. To make matters worse, these health effects can cause the body to react with a heightened response to immune system insults, such as COVID-19 infection. Put another way, exposure to polluting chemicals can lead to higher death rates from COVID-19.

Despite the harm they can cause, PFAS chemicals continue to be used in a variety of products imported into Vermont, exposing the people who use those products. PFAS chemicals present further threats when those items are disposed of and chemicals leach into our water. We need to take steps now to stop bringing more PFAS-containing products into the state.

S.295 targets four different areas of consumer products that are major sources of PFAS exposure and environmental contamination: food packaging, firefighting foam, residential carpets and rugs, and children's products.

Firefighting Foam

This bill restricts PFAS from Class-B Firefighting Foams. The PFAS-free foam market is well-established, cost competitive, and effective at fighting fires. Other states, including New Hampshire, New York, Colorado, and Washington have already enacted similar laws. Passing S.295 will put Vermont in line with other states and will allow us to ensure our firefighters and residents are protected by reducing the use of harmful and unnecessary PFAS chemicals in firefighting foam.

Food Packaging

The bill bans PFAS from food packaging and authorizes restrictions on phthalates and bisphenols. This policy builds on similar legislation already enacted in Washington and Maine. Single-use food containers are often treated with PFAS to make them resistant to water and grease. However, PFAS chemicals can migrate from food packaging into food, and from food into our bodies. When food packaging is disposed of in the landfill or at a composting facility, these chemicals can then leach into groundwater or contaminate compost with which Vermonters grow food. There are alternatives to PFAS in food packaging readily available, and major grocery chains and retailers are proactively banning these harmful chemicals from the food packaging they sell, demonstrating the availability of safer, cost-competitive alternatives.

Carpets and Rugs

The bill also bans PFAS from residential carpets and rugs. These chemicals are wholly unnecessary in our carpets and rugs - they are only added for their stain resistant properties. Unfortunately, these chemicals find their way into dust and air in our homes and ultimately into our bodies - posing a particular exposure risk to young children who spend a lot of time playing on rugs and carpets. PFAS-containing rugs and carpets are then disposed of in our landfills. A recent Agency of Natural Resources report found carpets to be a major contributor to PFAS chemicals going into Vermont's landfill, which results in PFAS-contaminated leachate. Washington and California are in the process of restricting PFAS in carpets and carpet treatments administratively. Home Depot and Lowe's (the top two home improvement retailers) already banned the sale of residential rugs and carpets with PFAS chemicals from their stores, which shows the widespread availability of cost-competitive PFAS-free alternatives.

Chemicals of High Concern to Children

Finally, this bill adds PFAS chemicals to the Act 188 list of Chemicals of High Concern to Children. The addition of PFAS to this list will simply require reporting the use of these chemicals by manufacturers if they are being used in children's products sold in Vermont. This will help us understand where and how these PFAS chemicals are being used in our children's products.

We urge you to support S.295 because it takes important steps to turn off the tap of more toxic chemicals - particularly PFAS - coming into Vermont, which harm our people and contaminate our environment. During this public health crisis, it's more important than ever to take reasonable steps like this to better protect Vermonters' health.

Thank you for your consideration.

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