



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2209

October 1, 2020

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20460

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20002

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Administrator Wheeler, Secretary DeVos and Secretary Azar:

We write to express our concerns regarding possible toxic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in the drinking water of our nation's schools and child care facilities. We urge you to protect the health of our children, families and communities by taking comprehensive and urgent measures to identify and remediate PFAS chemicals in the drinking water of schools and child care facilities across the country.

A recent analysis of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and state data shows at least 27 schools and child care facilities in 18 states, including Michigan, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, that are located within 5,000 feet of manufacturers that are known or suspected of producing or using PFAS.^[1] Based on available state data, at least 110 schools and child care facilities have tested positive for PFAS in their drinking water across the country.^[2] These toxic chemicals present a serious danger to children and adults. Current studies show that PFAS exposure may affect growth, learning and behavior of infants and older children and have been

^[1] <https://www.ewg.org/research/pfas-schools/>

^[2] https://www.ewg.org/interactive-maps/pfas_contamination/map/

linked to cancer and damage to both reproductive and immune systems in adults.^{[3],[4]} Exposure to PFAS can even reduce the effectiveness of vaccines.^[5]

PFAS chemicals are not yet regulated contaminants under the Safe Drinking Water Act, meaning schools are not required by federal law to test for the presence of PFAS in tap water, nor are they required to filter it out. Our understanding of the severity and scope of PFAS exposure in educational facilities at this time is limited, with most research coming from states, including Michigan, New Hampshire, Ohio and Vermont, who have recently initiated efforts to test for PFAS in school tap water.^{[6],[7],[8],[9]} Thus, reports indicating the close proximity of schools and child care facilities to PFAS contaminants is all the more alarming and calls for swift action to protect the health of American children.

We request that the EPA and U.S. Department of Education work together to combat PFAS chemicals in educational facilities and their surrounding communities by:

1. Finalizing the determination of PFAS chemicals as regulated contaminants under the Safe Drinking Water Act.
2. Enacting urgently needed national drinking water standards for all measurable PFAS chemicals, including but not limited to PFOA, PFOS and GenX, ensuring standards apply to educational facilities.
3. Creating national standards under the Clean Water Act restricting industrial discharges of PFAS chemicals, including industrial dischargers near schools and child care facilities.
4. Providing schools and child care facilities resources to test and report results for PFAS in facility drinking water systems, including school and municipal systems that serve fewer than 10,000 people and additional tests for school and child care facilities that obtain drinking water from local community water systems.
5. Developing a publicly accessible database of schools and child care facilities where PFAS is detected and a national notification system to alert families, students and workers at these facilities about possible exposure.
6. Working with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as state and local governments to provide parents, family members, students and workers information on the health hazards of PFAS exposure and applicable resources to seek health care, including blood testing.
7. Conducting a nationwide study on PFAS exposure in school and child care facilities, identifying avenues for exposure including in drinking water, school infrastructure such as carpeting and food packaging where PFAS chemicals could be present.
8. Providing guidance to schools and child care facilities on ways to reduce exposures to PFAS in items like cookware, food packaging, floor and furniture wax, carpeting and upholstery.

^[3] <https://www.mottchildren.org/posts/your-child/pfas-contamination>

^[4] <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/health-effects/index.html>

^[5] <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/14/7/691/htm>

^[6] <https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/09/at-michigan-schools-urgent-pfas-response-no-guarantee.html>

^[7] <https://www.seacoastonline.com/news/20191119/pfas-found-in-nh-schools-drinking-water>

^[8] <https://www.dispatch.com/news/20200302/ohio-epa-water-systems-at-schools-daycares-being-tested-first-for-pfas>

^[9] <https://dec.vermont.gov/press-release/state-confirms-three-public-water-systems-have-pfas-above-standard>

We look forward to working with you to protect American families from the dangers of PFAS.

Sincerely,

ANDY LEVIN
Member of Congress

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