



March 8, 2021

**SUPPORT The PFAS Protection Act  
SB 195/HB 22**

Senator Paul G. Pinsky  
Chair, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Baden Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Pinsky:

We write to strongly urge you to protect Maryland residents from exposure to a class of chemicals that threaten public health by supporting SB 195 -- the PFAS Protection Act. There is an urgent need for the enactment of this bill. Consumer Reports is an independent, nonprofit organization - with over 50,000 members in Maryland - that works with consumers for truth, transparency, and fairness in the marketplace through rigorous, independent testing and research.

Some of the toxic effects associated with PFAS exposure to these chemicals include immunotoxicity, cancer, thyroid disease, birth defects, and decreased sperm quality. They reduce the immune response to childhood vaccines and may increase the risk of infectious disease. In addition, PFAS exposure has been directly linked to several underlying conditions that make people more vulnerable to severe symptoms of COVID-19, including obesity, asthma, kidney disease, and high cholesterol.

The presence of PFAS in drinking water can come from a number of sources: discharge from facilities that manufacture or use PFAS, leaching from the use of fire fighting foam, and leaching from a range of products containing PFAS that are discarded in landfills.

Exposure to PFAS through food packaging is a critical issue that is addressed in SB 195. Some manufacturers add PFAS to food packaging to make it water- and grease-resistant, which can contaminate the food with which it comes into contact. The increase in the consumption of take-out foods during the pandemic has elevated the risk of consumer exposure to PFAS.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) last year reported that it had detected PFAS in a variety of foods purchased around the country, including produce, meats and seafood. Testing also has found PFAS in seafood (striped bass, crab, oyster) caught in Maryland waters. Another recent test conducted by the Mind the Store campaign and Toxic-Free Future detected PFAS in the packaging of foods sold by major retailers. Fortunately, this prompted some retailers to announce a switch to safer alternatives, thereby demonstrating the availability of and feasibility of non-PFAS food packaging.

Given their widespread use, PFAS are detectable in the blood of 97 percent of people in the United States. They have been termed “forever chemicals” because they do not break down in our bodies or the environment. It is urgent that we eliminate the use of these chemicals wherever possible to reduce our exposure and resulting health risks.

There are safe alternatives to PFAS-treated food packaging. In fact, major retailers and restaurants including McDonalds, Panera Bread, Taco Bell, Chipotle, Whole Foods Market, Sweetgreen, and Cava have announced their intention to ban PFAS or have already begun using safer alternatives.

The states of Maine, New York and Washington have imposed a ban on PFAS in food packaging. We urge you to include the state of Maryland on this list by supporting the PFAS Protection Act.

Sincerely,

/s/

Brian Ronholm  
Director, Food Policy  
Consumer Reports