



August 11, 2020

Michelle Davis
Executive Director
Washington State Board of Health
PO Box 47990
Olympia, WA 98504-7990

Dear Ms. Davis and Washington State Board of Health Members:

We, the undersigned organizations hereby express our serious concern over the [proposed delay](#) in setting state drinking water standards for toxic per- and polyfluoralkyl substances (PFAS). In light of the extreme harm caused by this class of chemicals the Board of Health should move forward with speed, not delay.

Washington State has stood out time and again as a leader in reducing toxics and keeping our air and water clean. Our collective commitment to engaging scientists, local communities, manufacturers and legislators has spurred the transition to safer alternatives for everyday products ranging from baby bottles to firefighting foam.

Addressing PFAS contamination in drinking water is among our most important efforts to ensure Washingtonians' access to clean drinking water. Though this effort has been underway for years, COVID-19 has escalated the urgency of eliminating toxics that we know harm our immune systems. We urge the board to avoid any further delays and begin formal rulemaking immediately.

Nearly three years ago, several of our organizations came together to petition the state Board of Health to put Washington on a path to safer drinking water by establishing a standard for PFAS, forever chemicals that persist in our bodies and our environment. We were concerned about the broad impact of these chemicals, especially alarming in communities close to manufacturing plants making or using PFAS and military installations. From Cape Fear, North Carolina to Airway Heights here in Washington, we've been striving to turn the tap off PFAS and end decades of unfettered drinking water pollution.

The Board of Health initially responded quickly, recognizing that these persistent, mobile compounds required urgent action to prevent health effects including cancer, increased cholesterol, and immune suppression. The Board first filed a CR-101 in December 2017 to consider the rule-making process and began drafting the rule in September 2018. The Board has already sought public comment on a pre-draft rule in the fall of 2019 and held public meetings. The original timeline for rule adoption was August 2020. However, the timeline was delayed and the formal rulemaking process was supposed to start this fall with rule adoption in January 2021. It now appears DOH is considering another delay with yet

another pre-draft rule— a delay that would push the process out a year from the original timeline to the spring/summer of 2021.

These delays mean drinking water systems are not being adequately tested and cleaned up if PFAS are found and chemical companies are left unaccountable. Testing is crucial to finding the sources of PFAS contamination, to protecting the people most harmed, and ensuring local jurisdictions aren't left holding the bill on costly clean-up projects. PFAS problems in Washington continue to grow:

- Lawsuits are mounting. The [Washington State Department of Corrections](#), the City of Airway Heights, the [Lakewood Water District](#) and the [Kalispel Tribe](#) have each filed lawsuits this year to help recoup the costs of clean-up and other impacts of inaction by the U.S. government and chemical companies.
- [EPA data from 2016](#), not previously included in the PFAS Chemical Action Plan, shows significant PFAS groundwater contamination at a [Moses Lake Superfund site](#) above the EPA drinking water advisory level (currently 70 ppt PFOS/PFOA). While the groundwater is currently not used as drinking water, the level in one sampling well on the site was nearly 10 times the EPA advisory level. There are nearby private drinking water wells that should have more extensive testing and it cannot be assumed PFAS won't move into aquifers that are used for drinking water or get into Moses Lake.
- The Centers for Disease Control [recently measured](#) elevated levels of PFAS in the blood of Airway Heights residents.

The consequences of inaction and delay are clear, and they're unacceptable, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic when we need to protect people from these immune-harming chemicals. At a time when Washington state should be leading, we're falling behind. Washington must join the growing number of states that are enacting safe drinking water standards to keep their communities safe from PFAS.

Signed,

Laurie Valeriano
Executive Director
Toxic-Free Future

Martin Gibbins
Climate & Water Issues Chair
League of Women Voters of Washington

LeAnne Beres
Executive Director
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Pam Clough
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