



Learning  
Disabilities  
Association  
of Maine



Solutions for a  
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022

Dear REI store manager,

Thanks for taking the time to talk with us today. We are advocates from **Defend Our Health**, an organization that works to make sure that everybody has equal access to safe food and drinking water, healthy homes, and products that are toxic-free and climate-friendly, and **Learning Disabilities Association of Maine**, an organization dedicated to assisting individuals with specific learning disabilities through support, education, and advocacy.

As one of the leading outdoor retailers in the country – we are grateful for REI’s ongoing work to connect people to the natural world.

We are writing because we are concerned about REI’s sale of outdoor apparel and other products that contain PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances). This is not consistent with the co-op’s values.

A growing body of scientific research has found links between exposures to PFAS and a wide range of health problems including a weaker immune system, certain types of cancer, increased cholesterol levels, pregnancy-induced hypertension, liver damage, reduced fertility, and increased risk of thyroid disease. In addition, the CDC states that some studies in people have shown certain PFAS chemicals may affect “learning and behavior of infants and older children”.<sup>i</sup>

A recent study published by Toxic-Free Future found PFAS in outdoor gear sold by REI. PFAS are often referred to as “forever” chemicals because they are not known to break down in the environment and can easily move through soil to drinking water. With remarkable persistence and mobility, PFAS have become global pollutants that threaten the health of people and wildlife. In Maine, we have been dealing with the dire impacts of PFAS contamination and know that the solution is to turn off the tap and stop the non-essential use of PFAS in products.

Alternatives exist. For example, Patagonia has committed to phasing out PFAS by 2024. REI should also set a clear policy and aggressive timeline to ban the sale of all products containing PFAS.

States across the country, from Washington to New York are taking legislative and regulatory action to address PFAS in textiles and other products. The Maine Legislature passed a piece of legislation in 2021

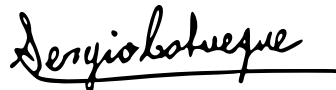
that bans the sale of products containing intentionally added PFAS by 2030. We applaud policymakers' actions, and we believe retailers like REI have an important role to play too.

Over the last few months, more than 110,000 REI customers have signed petitions and sent e-mails to REI CEO Eric Artz demanding action on PFAS. But so far, the company has not taken meaningful action.

We are hoping you will talk to your headquarters about our visit and concerns and encourage your senior management teams to ban the sale of products containing PFAS. While we understand that the decision to sell products containing dangerous chemicals is not yours, we urge you to use the influence you have as a manager to bring this issue to your regional manager and headquarters.

Thank you for your attention to this critically important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sergio Cahueque". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Sergio Cahueque  
Organizer  
Defend Our Health

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Tracy L. Gregoire". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Tracy Gregoire  
Healthy Children Project Coordinator  
Learning Disabilities Association of Maine

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<sup>i</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention, September 2019, CDC and ATSDR Award \$7 Million to Begin Multi-Site PFAS Study, <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2019/p0923-cdc-atsdr-award-pfas-study.html>