



Eric Artz, President & CEO  
REI Co-Op  
1700 45th St E  
Sumner, WA 98352

September 21, 2022

**Re: Washingtonians want REI to eliminate PFAS in products it sells**

Dear Mr. Artz:

**As Washington-state-based organizations, we are writing to urge you to take bold action to phase out and ban the use of PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) in products sold at REI.**

Washington state leads the nation with precedent-setting laws that prevent the use of dangerous chemicals in products. The Safer Products for Washington law targets the persistent class of PFAS for elimination. Last month, Washington Governor Inslee signed a bill (HB 1694) into law that will tackle PFAS “forever chemicals” in a broad range of products on the fastest timeline in the nation, by 2025. Product categories include apparel, cosmetics, and firefighter personal protective equipment. If our state can lead, our business community can and must also lead by adopting safer solutions now.

Many of us are long-term members and customers of REI, not only because we like your gear but because we strongly support REI’s environmental values and its commitment to being good stewards.

However, REI’s decision to put its name on and sell products that contain dangerous PFAS chemicals that pollute drinking water supplies, wildlife, and even breast milk starkly contradicts REI’s commitments to sustainability. Communities in Washington state, including Whidbey Island, Airway Heights, and Issaquah, have been severely impacted by PFAS pollution. The costs of cleaning up PFAS once it gets into the environment are staggering with Washington allocating more than \$27 million in state funds to clean up PFAS in drinking water. PFAS have also been found in orcas, which are a particularly vulnerable species. And exposure to PFAS has been linked to immune suppression and die-offs in marine mammals.

We also know that women in Washington state are being exposed to PFAS because they are showing up in their breast milk. A [2021 study](#) published in the peer-reviewed journal *Environmental Science & Technology* and authored by Toxic-Free Future and scientists at Indiana University, the University of

Washington, and Seattle Children’s Research Institute looked at levels of PFAS in Puget Sound-area women. The first study since 2004 to analyze PFAS in breast milk from mothers in the United States, the study found that 50 out of 50 women tested positive for PFAS, with levels ranging from 52 parts per trillion (ppt) to more than 500 ppt. And detections of the newer chemicals like the ones used to waterproof jackets are doubling every four years.

We acknowledge REI has taken some small steps to limit PFAS in a few products such as ski wax. Those are good steps. But REI still sells jackets, boots, snow gear, and other items that are treated with toxic PFAS.

In the 2022 report [Toxic Convenience: The hidden costs of forever chemicals in stain- and water-resistant products](#), six of the eight products purchased at REI contained PFAS. Three items contained only newer PFAS, and three contained a mixture of older and newer PFAS. Two REI-branded jackets made with Gore-Tex tested particularly high for total fluorine, likely due to the use of a PFAS membrane in addition to a surface treatment. All three REI-branded jackets contained older PFAS, which are banned for production in the U.S. and the European Union. Companies are no longer allowed to import these products into the United States without permission from the federal government.

Over the last year, more than 130,000 REI customers and members from across the country have signed petitions calling on the company to lead the outdoor industry away from PFAS.

As Washingtonians, we strongly urge REI to adopt a comprehensive policy to phase out and ban PFAS in all products in your stores. We need your leadership now and stand ready to congratulate REI for taking decisive action on this critical public health and environmental issue.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rev. AC Churchill, Executive Director  
**Earth Ministry/ Washington Interfaith Power  
and Light**  
Seattle, WA

Laurie Valeriano, Executive Director  
**Toxic-Free Future**  
Seattle, WA

Pam Clough, Advocate  
**Environment Washington**  
Steilacoom, WA

Nicole Walter, Advocate  
**WashPIRG**  
Seattle, WA

Blair Englebrecht, Policy and Boating Programs  
Manager  
**Puget Soundkeeper Alliance**  
Seattle, WA

Mindy Roberts, Puget Sound Program Director  
**Washington Environmental Council**  
Seattle, WA