



March 2, 2023

Dear Chair Hawj and Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the North Star Chapter of Sierra Club in support of the following bills:

SF 450 Products containing PFAS notice requirement

SF 776 Firefighting foam use prohibition

SF 834 PFAS in certain products prohibition

PFAS are a large group of thousands of chemicals used in hundreds of product types from cookware, cosmetics, ski wax, bike lube, textiles, and cleaning supplies. They contain a strong carbon-fluorine bond that does not break down. This is one of the things that makes them useful in consumer products and industrial applications, but this persistence also causes them to buildup in the environment and in our bodies.

PFAS are toxic and are associated with many serious health problems including cancer, thyroid disease, decreased fertility, decreased immune response, high cholesterol, ulcerative colitis, and reproductive problems. PFAS is found in the blood of 98% of the population and it bioaccumulates and stays in the body for years. PFAS is an endocrine disrupting chemical that poses the greatest risk for developing babies and children. Babies are born with PFAS in their blood and are also exposed to PFAS in breast milk.

PFAS is a health risk for firefighters. They are exposed through PFAS in Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) and in their turnout gear. This exposure is associated with increasing rates of cancer among firefighters. The use of AFFF is among the biggest sources of PFAS pollution. While the FAA currently requires the use of AFFF with PFAS, their standards are based on the military specifications. On Jan. 6th, the Pentagon published a new military specification for a PFAS-free replacement. By October 2023, all military purchases of AFFF must meet those new specs and the Defense Department must cease all use of PFAS-foam by October 2024. SF 776 is important to ensure that when the FAA updates their regulation for AFFF, Minnesota will be able to switch to PFAS-free AFFF without further delay.

Some argue that we should not ban PFAS because it is critical for things like medical equipment. SF834 addresses this concern and allows for the continued use of PFAS in critical applications where there are no alternatives. However, PFAS is most often used in consumer products for nice-to-have features like being stain-resistant, waterproof, or longer-lasting. It is impossible for consumers to avoid PFAS because its use is rarely revealed in ingredient lists or packaging. People assume products they purchase are safe to use and should not have to spend hours researching a product to make sure that is true. Chemicals that are toxic, build up in our bodies,



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and accumulate in the environment should only be used when it is critical and not in every-day products to provide a convenient feature.

Minnesota would not be the first state to adopt a ban on non-essential use of PFAS. Maine passed a similar bill in 2021 and earlier this month, the European Union proposed a sweeping ban on PFAS.

When shoe company Keen examined their use of PFAS, they found that for 70% of their products, like sandals and shoelaces, the PFAS being used was unnecessary and they were able to easily eliminate it. For the remaining 30%, where PFAS was being used for waterproofing, they found alternatives and were able to eliminate PFAS from all their products while maintaining quality.

In November 2022, investors with more than \$8 trillion in asset management called for a phase-out of 'forever chemicals.' There are more than 9,000 known PFAS compounds, at least 600 are currently used in the U.S and few are regulated. They are found in more than 200 product categories. If required to examine their products and supply chain, many companies may unexpectedly find they are using PFAS or, like Keen, find that they are using more PFAS in their products than is necessary. SF450 will ensure companies prepare for the future regarding the use of PFAS. If companies use a toxic chemical that poses serious health risks and permanently contaminates our environment, they should be aware of what they're using, how much, and for what purpose.

In a New York Times interview in 2000, William E. Coyne, the head of research and development at 3M, said, "the best decision we can make now is to stop adding [PFAS] to the environment. This is a corporate responsibility issue. This product does not decompose, it's inert -- it's persistent; it's like a rock." Mr. Coyne was right; we should not continue to add PFAS to the environment. Now is the time to make that change. Thank you for your support of these three important bills.

Sincerely,

Lori Olinger
Chair, Zero Waste Task Force
Sierra Club North Star Chapter