



Learning Disabilities  
Association of America



HEALTHY CHILDREN  
PROJECT

**In SUPPORT of Senate Bill 121 and House Bill 171 PFAS Bills**

For public hearing on February 16, 2022

Dear Chair Revak, Vice Chair Micciche, and Members of the Senate Resources Committee:

The Learning Disabilities Association of Alaska (LDA) is a statewide, non-profit organization of individuals with specific learning disabilities and attention disabilities, and the families and the professionals who support them. LDA-ME provides education and support to families of children with learning disabilities and adults with learning disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on **Senate Bill 121 and House Bill 171** to take critical action on PFAS chemicals.

Approximately 13% of children in the United States have a developmental disability<sup>i</sup>. Thousands more children have ADD/ADHD<sup>ii</sup>. The CDC now estimates that 1 in 44 children in the United States have an autism spectrum disorder<sup>iii</sup>. The incidence of these types of disabilities is rising every year at an alarming pace, especially for autism and ADHD. In Alaska, about 7,000 children have a specific learning disabilities and about 13% of students receive special education services<sup>iv</sup>.

The National Academy of Sciences Committee on Developmental Toxicology, estimates that at least 28% of developmental defects are caused in whole or part by environmental exposures to toxic chemicals<sup>v</sup>. These are **PREVENTABLE causes** of these disabilities.

Per- and polyfluoralkyl substances, also known as PFAS chemicals, are man-made chemicals that are found in our food, water, air and products. They are used to make products more resistant to stains, grease and water. There are over 9,000 PFAS chemicals and they are used in many products including food containers, electronics, cleaning products, textiles, and some firefighting foams.

PFAS chemicals pose significant health risks at extremely low exposure levels, particularly for pregnant women and children. PFAS are nicknamed “forever chemicals” because they are bio accumulative and don’t break down (also known as PBT chemicals - Persistent, Bioaccumulative and Toxic). There is widespread human exposure and they can stay in our bodies for years. They are such a concern that the EPA has set a lifetime health advisory level for a few of these chemicals, although the latest science tells us drinking water standards should be 700 times lower than

this guidance level. There are no enforceable drinking water standards at either the state or federal level which makes it all the more important that the Alaska State Legislature strengthens and passes this bill.

People are exposed to PFAS through contaminated food, water and air, from products containing these chemicals, and worker related exposures

We know PFAS is expensive to evaluate and clean up, however it is important to take measures now to prevent further harm to health and liability.

PFAS used in industrial firefighting foams on airports, military bases, and training areas are contaminating the drinking water of communities throughout Alaska. This bill will help prevent further harm and protect the health of all Alaskans, especially our most vulnerable including first responders, children, pregnant women, those with chronic illnesses, and seniors. A growing body of research has indicated that PFAS may affect growth, learning, and behavior of infants and older children; interfere with the body's natural hormones; impair fertility; increase cholesterol levels; affect the immune system; reduce vaccine-induced immune protection in children; and increase the risk of some cancers. The drinking water standards should be more health protective and based on the current science such as those enacted in states as Maine and Massachusetts: maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) of 20 parts per trillion (ppt) for a set of one or more of at least six PFAS<sup>vi</sup>.

We also know that studies have linked PFAS to impaired fetal development as well as interfering with the thyroid and low birth weight, which can then affect children's brains. The CDC states that some studies in people have shown certain PFAS chemicals may affect "learning, and behavior of infants and older children"<sup>vii</sup>.

Biomonitoring studies have shown that nearly every person in the US, including newborns, have PFAS in their bloodstream. Diet is likely to be the single largest exposure pathway to PFAS.

On behalf of Alaska's children, Learning Disabilities Association urges this committee to **vote unanimously to pass** so that we can better protect all families from PFAS chemicals.

Sincerely,

Matthew Talley  
Alaska Healthy Children Project Coordinator  
Juneau, Alaska  
(907) 7231872  
matthew.talley@gmail.com

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<sup>i</sup> *Health Care Use and Health and Functional Impact of Developmental Disabilities Among US Children, 1997-2005*, Sheree L. Boulet, DrPH, MPH; Coleen A. Boyle, PhD; Laura A. Schieve, PhD

<sup>ii</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>

<sup>iii</sup> National Center for Learning Disabilities, <https://www.nclld.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Maine.Snapshot.v2.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://education.alaska.gov/sped>

<sup>v</sup> Scientific Frontiers in Developmental Toxicology and Risk Assessment, Executive Summary, [http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=9871&page=1](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=9871&page=1), National Academy of Sciences Committee on Developmental Toxicology

<sup>vi</sup> Laura Anderko et al 2020, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32122814/>

<sup>vii</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>



February 9, 2022

Dear House and Senate Resources Committees:

Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition (FCAC) supports the PFAS-regulating legislation contained in House Bill (HB) 171 and Senate Bill (SB) 121 and requests that your committees hold hearings on these bills as soon as possible. Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition is an Fairbanks-based coalition that is a group of concerned citizens motivated by the moral, spiritual, & scientific duty to take action & elevate voices calling for responsibility to each other, the earth, and all living beings. HB 171 and SB 121 are critical to protecting the people, lands, and waters of Alaska.

Clean and safe drinking water is a fundamental human right, and it is essential for the health of all Alaskans. Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are highly toxic at extremely low levels, and they are contaminating the drinking water of thousands of Alaskans from the North Slope to Southeast. The dispersive use of PFAS-based industrial firefighting foams (aqueous film-forming foams or AFFF) on military bases and airports has caused widespread contamination throughout Alaska. PFAS have been found at over 100 individual sites in nearly 30 locations across Alaska.<sup>1</sup> At least ten Alaska communities, including in Fairbanks and North Pole have PFAS in their drinking water at levels deemed unsafe by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and it is likely that the number of communities with contaminated water will grow as more sampling is conducted throughout the state.<sup>2</sup> PFAS are contaminating groundwater and surface waters, fish, wild game, garden produce and backyard chickens in Alaska. Several Alaska lakes are now closed to fishing because of PFAS contamination.<sup>3</sup>

PFAS chemicals are highly persistent and toxic at exceedingly low levels of exposure. PFAS have been linked with harmful health effects including immune suppression, decreased fertility, kidney and testicular cancer, increased risk of high blood pressure and pre-eclampsia, and increased risk of thyroid disease.<sup>4</sup> PFAS exposure weakens the immune system and can reduce the effectiveness of certain vaccines.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Alaska Community Action on Toxics, Threats to Drinking Water and Public Health in Alaska: The Scope of the PFAS Problem, Consequences of Regulatory Inaction, and Recommendations (September 2019), available at <https://www.akaction.org/wp-content/uploads/Report-Threats-to-Drinking-Water-and-Public-Health-in-Alaska-FINAL-web-version-9-24-19.pdf> (ACAT Report) at 25.

<sup>2</sup> ACAT Report at 4.

<sup>3</sup> ACAT Report at 30, 38.

<sup>4</sup> ACAT Report at 7.

<sup>5</sup> ACAT Report at 14.



While the science tells us that PFAS are dangerous to human health, there are no enforceable drinking water or food safety standards either at the state or federal level. The latest peer-reviewed science indicates that drinking water standards should be 700 times lower than the guidance level of 70 ppt set by the Environmental Protection Agency.<sup>6</sup>

It is therefore urgent that Alaska take steps to protect Alaskans from PFAS contamination. HB 171 and SB 121 would require greater protections for communities by preventing and addressing PFAS contamination, including the setting of enforceable drinking water standards for a number of PFAS as well as requirements for polluters to pay for safe drinking water and blood tests for people affected by PFAS contamination.

These measures—and more—are urgently needed. The legislation must be strengthened by requiring more health protective drinking water standards; requiring the phase out of PFAS in fire-fighting foam for all industries, including oil and gas; and eliminating incineration of PFAS wastes.

We respectfully request that your committees treat PFAS as the urgent health crisis that they are and act quickly to schedule hearings on these essential protections for Alaskans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Girard', is positioned below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Jessica J. Girard

Founding Director

Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition

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<sup>6</sup> Lerner, S., Teflon Toxin Safety Level Should Be 700 Times Lower Than Current EPA Guideline. The Intercept (June 2019), available at: <https://theintercept.com/2019/06/18/pfoa-pfas-teflon-epa-limit/>.

1. Lin Davis
2. Deborah Hemenway
3. Pamela Miller
4. Mx. Jordan Ebert
5. Kelly McLaughlin
6. Sandra Christopherson
7. John M. Kennish
8. Christin Swearingen

Dear Senators:

It has been known for years Alaskans that Alaskan are being poisoned by PFAS. Using contaminated ground or surface water and eating their backyard garden produce, eating their chickens, eating local fish and game, drinking water from city and private wells, this PFAS poison, makes itself forever and far and wide. Thousands of Alaskans receive this daily contamination.

I urge this resource committee to address this statewide health problem, pass SB121. The State is responsible for safe drinking water. It is so frightening that this emergency has not yet received your legislative attention.

If SB121 is passed immediately, remediation can begin in 3 beginning areas: stopping the continuing use of PFAS; site testing; and safely getting rid of current stockpiles.

Many states are way ahead of Alaska in remediation. Amendments to SB121 will unfold as scientific knowledge increases about PFAS decontamination. This is phase one. Please pass this bill.

Urgency is our main ingredient. Basic common sense steps are needed now.

Thank you.

Lin Davis  
3120 Nowell Ave  
Juneau 99801

February 14, 2022

To: Members of Senate Resource Committee

Re: SB 121 PFAS Use and Remediation; Fire/Water Safety

I would like to urge your support of this legislation. I live with ground water affected by PFAS in Gustavus. I believe that this bill will help me and other people across our state whose water systems are affected by PFAS. It is time for our state, our local government and our federal government to step up and start taking action to set guidelines for PFAS contamination and its effects on the innocent people who are living with this toxic chemical that companies knowingly used and continued to use while knowing the harm it does to people and animals. It is also time for companies to clean up this toxin that has spread to everyone on the planet. No one is safe from PFAS and everyone deserves clean water and uncontaminated soil.

Thank you,

Deborah Hemenway  
17 Fara Way  
PO Box 301  
Gustavus, AK 99826

Dear Chair Revak, Vice Chair Micciche, and Members of the Senate Resources Committee,

In case you haven't seen it, Dr. John Kennish authored an important opinion editorial published in the Sunday edition of the Juneau Empire emphasizing the urgency of scheduling hearings and passing SB 121. I think he speaks for many Alaskans who consider this an urgent water quality and public health issue.

We request your leadership in scheduling a hearing as soon as possible on SB 121 and your help in ensuring its passage.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kindest regards,  
Pamela Miller



Dear Alaska Senate Resources Committee,

I am writing today to urge you to please have a hearing on Senate Bill 121 - which addresses PFAS contamination and establishes health-protective measures - within the next 30 days.

PFAS are a class of over 5000 manmade chemicals that are highly toxic and persistent, which means they never break down in the environment. They are linked to a litany of serious health problems like increased risk of thyroid disease, decreased fertility, liver disease, certain cancers like testicular and kidney, and more.

In Alaska, the dispersive use of PFAS-containing firefighting foams on military bases and airports has contaminated the drinking water of communities from the North Slope to southeast Alaska. PFAS have been discovered at over 100 individual sites in nearly 30 locations, and many more need to be investigated. There are safe alternatives that provide for fire safety without causing long-term harm to our waters, wildlife, and people.

I am concerned for my health and safety, the health and safety of my family, and that of all Alaskans. Please, schedule a hearing for SB 121, and let's work together to get this important legislation passed.

Thank you

Sincerely,

Mx. Jordan Ebert

1001 Boniface Pkwy Spc 17N Anchorage, AK 99504-1649 [jordanebert@live.com](mailto:jordanebert@live.com)

Hello to House and Senate Resources Committees,  
As we are now in the beginning of a new legislative session, I would like to ask that hearings be scheduled for HB 171 and SB 121 as soon as possible.  
Please let me know if there is anything that GPAC can do to help.

Thank you.

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Kelly McLaughlin  
PO Box 234  
Gustavus, Alaska 99826  
907-723-5459

Please schedule the hearing for Bill S121 in this first month that the legislature meets. This bill deals with keeping the toxic substance, PFAS, out of Alaskan' drinking water and out of fire fighting chemicals. This bill will affect the health of everyone and must not be ignored. I urge you to pay attention to this bill as soon as possible.

Thank you for understanding that this is a critical issue.

Sandra Christopherson

**From:** John M. Kennish

Thank you for meeting with us on this issue last year. We hope that you can arrange a public meeting early during the current session. We understand how hectic and stressful the legislative sessions are, but we hope you will consider the seriousness of this problem. It will be much less costly to address the bills sooner rather than later. I hope you can discuss this with Senator Sullivan who is very aware of the problem and perhaps he could offer some clear resolution which include federal direction and support.. As you are aware the bills to regulate PFAS use in Alaska were introduced in the Alaska State Senate and Alaska House. These identical bills (SB 121 and HB 171) are titled "An Act relating to pollutants; relating to perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances; relating to the duties of the Department of Environmental Conservation; relating to firefighting substances; relating to thermal remediation of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substance contamination; and providing for an effective date." Thank you again for your time and consideration. If necessary, I can be reached at 907-230-8093 or at [kennish@live.com](mailto:kennish@live.com)

Hello,

I support SB 121 because PFAS are highly toxic, even at very low exposure levels, and I don't want them in my body.

SB 121 is a common sense bill that would help protect communities from PFAS contamination. Although I think it doesn't go far enough, it is a step in the right direction.

-Christin Swearingen

1455 Justin Dr.

Fairbanks