

Karen Nguyen
1850 Bellevue Loop
Anchorage, AK 99515
April 28, 2021

Dear Chair Patkotak and Members of the House Resource Committee:

My name is Karen Nguyen. I was born and raised in Savoonga and Nome and I now reside in Anchorage, Alaska.

I am writing this letter in support of HB 171 because clean, safe drinking water is very important for our health and well-being. It is a right for people to have clean water to sustain themselves.

Studies have shown that PFAS are linked to cancers, especially kidney and testicular cancer. Additionally, PFAS are linked to other complications like thyroid disease and reproductive impediments. I grew up at Northeast Cape on St. Lawrence Island where there are two Federally Used Defense Sites, and they left many toxic contaminants like PFAS behind. The salmon that use to spawn in the Suqi river do not return there to spawn anymore. However, stickleback fish are back in the river and research has found fire retardant in them. There is so much cancer on my Island, many kinds of cancer that can be attributed to all the toxic chemical exposures whether it be from Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPS) as the Arctic is a hemispheric sink for all the pollutants and microplastics. I have lost many of my family and friends to cancer, most recently my sister Norma Jean Nicholson. I have another sister who is a survivor of breast cancer. We have children with learning disabilities, thyroid disease, diabetes and obesity and many other diseases that were not known to us back in the day before all these exposures. I urge the committee act on this legislation to protect our health, the water, environment, and animals.

There are safer and effective alternatives to PFAS in firefighting foam and toxic PFAS-based firefighting foams and must be replaced to prevent further harm to our drinking water, the animals we subsist on, our environment, and the health of our families and communities. While I am originally from Savoonga, I have lived in Anchorage for 25 plus years and live close to contaminated sites such as the airport and Kulis and have five daughters, 13 grandchildren and numerous extended family and friends who I want to protect.

As you may know, PFOA is in the blood of 92% of our youth and young men and women. PFAS is highly persistent and travels on wind and ocean currents from very long distances and are found in our traditional foods. I visit annually and eat the food gathered there and I have had 3 benign tumors in my breast and 3 tests with pre-cancer cells in my cervix. The rates of cancer, thyroid, diabetes is among the highest in the country in my village and island and are 4 to 10 times higher than the rest of the United States. I am extremely concerned about the effects of PFAS and what it is doing to people here in Alaska and around the world.

It is very important that you eliminate the use of PFAS substances as a class to protect the people of Alaska, the Arctic, the animals and around the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Nguyen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "K".

Karen Nguyen

Tribal Member
Native Village of Savoonga, Alaska