



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Public Health  
In support of H.2197/S.1356 An Act to protect Massachusetts public health from PFAS  
By Carolyn Lee, LWVMA Natural Resources Specialist  
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The League of Women Voters of the United States knows that pollution of our natural resources must be controlled in order to preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of ecosystems and to protect public health. The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) has long supported toxic chemical regulation as part of its support for legislation that results in the maximum protection of public health of all people and the environment.

PFAS chemicals, more than 20,000 of which are known to have been manufactured, have been with us for decades. The hazards of them have been known almost as long. As an MIT trained chemical engineer with a masters in plastics engineering, I have tracked their history with alarm for more than a decade. A small subset of PFAS were banned from manufacture in the United States in 2015, but PFAS are still incorporated into many products, sometimes by deliberate addition, sometimes as a by-product of the manufacturing process and sometimes by reactions after manufacture. All result in highly toxic chemicals in a wide variety of products that make their way into our water supplies, our soils and our bodies, where they persist and accumulate.

None of the PFAS or PFOAs that have been tested for toxicity have been found to be safe. When it is asserted that some are safe, the reality is they have not been tested, or worse yet, exempted from testing by weak regulations. Subtle changes in chemical structures do not typically change biological interactions. PFAS chemicals are the most toxic chemicals still widely used in products. Manufacturers of many kinds of products find these additives convenient in their processes. Our public health is far more important than manufacturing ease. Clean ups of existing serious contamination are insufficient and working on the wrong end of the problem.

Recently there has been substantial publicity on the extensive contamination of water and soil sources and the extremely expensive methods attempting to clean that water. Nobody knows how to clean PFAS contaminated soil. The enormous amounts of money spent to mitigate contamination represents funds that cannot be invested positively in the state to improve our business climate and public health. Cleanup is important, but what is imperative is to turn off the tap! We cannot successfully mitigate contamination that we are continuing to exacerbate. These bills will help to stop the flow of new contaminants into our bodies and the environment. Currently, no person can choose to avoid contamination, because we never know where it is. We have little knowledge of which products we use are contaminated, and thus cannot choose safe products. Demanding full disclosure and banning their import is our only way of preventing further contamination.

We must stop the flow of PFAS into our bodies and the environment. These bills, by restricting import into Massachusetts of products containing PFAS and requiring disclosure, will help that. Making us safer is not a threat to our businesses, rather it makes our Commonwealth a more desirable place to raise families.

The time to start is now. As we have learned from the Maine legislation, implementing comprehensive legislation such as this tends to take longer than expected. That is not a reason to delay; it is a reason to expedite. If we have enough states with such bans, that will help to drive federal legislation. Industry likes uniformity across state lines. Massachusetts should be a leader in this effort, as we have been in so many other arenas.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, with 44 local Leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, strongly urges this committee to give H.2197/S.1356 a favorable report out of committee and then urge leadership to pass this legislation. LWV supports the preservation of the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the ecosystem and maximum protection of public health and the environment. The PFAS contamination of our bodies and the whole environment is a critical issue. We need to protect all of us, human and others, from further damage to our health by these chemicals.

Thank you for your consideration.