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Written Testimony for Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee  
“Examining Federal Efforts to Address PFAS Contamination”

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Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman and Members of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide a written statement for the hearing on “Examining Federal Efforts to Address PFAS Contamination”.

My name is Andrea Amico and I am from Portsmouth, New Hampshire. I learned in May of 2014 that the Pease Tradeport, the site of the former Pease Air Force Base, now converted into a highly successful business park, had high levels of PFAS contamination in the drinking water. This news hit me hard because my husband was working for a company on Pease and my 2 young children were attending a daycare there. I had never heard of PFAS before and was shocked to learn of the high levels in my community's drinking water. However, I educated myself and was deeply concerned to learn how toxic and pervasive these chemicals are in the environment and the human body and it worried me. When I enrolled my kids in the daycare center on Pease (before knowing the water was contaminated), I thought I did everything right as a mom. I toured the beautiful facility, I met with the director, I asked about their first aid certification status and teaching curriculum, but I never once asked about the quality and safety of the water coming out of their taps. It wasn't even on my radar that clean, safe water was a worry I needed to have in this country. Sadly, I was wrong to make that assumption and now my children and husband have been contaminated without consent and poisoned without permission due to drinking water they consumed daily while at work and at daycare at Pease. The pain and guilt I live with everyday knowing my family, especially my young children who were exposed to high levels of PFAS as babies and toddlers, and at critical stages of their development is one I don't wish on any mother or person. PFAS contamination has me worrying every time my children get sick whether this is cancer or some other serious health effect, worrying if my children will be able to have children of their own someday, worrying in a global pandemic if their immune system is strong enough to fight if they get sick with Covid. PFAS has robbed me of my happiness as a mother and I will never get that back.

**PFAS Community Leader:**

As a result of my family and my community being contaminated with PFAS from a former military base, I have worked tirelessly to advocate for PFAS blood testing, PFAS health studies, physician education, regulations and legislation for the Pease community, throughout my state of New Hampshire, and across the nation. I founded a community action group called Testing for Pease in 2015. And in 2017, I helped to found the National PFAS Contamination Coalition to bring together PFAS communities leaders from all over the country working to address PFAS. I have also worked closely and collaboratively with my local, state, and federal elected officials to address PFAS. I credit many of the accomplishments the Pease community has obtained to address PFAS due to the strong collaboration between the impacted community and elected

officials who have taken this issue seriously and passed leading edge legislation that has resulted in meaningful action for my community.

In addition to serving on many PFAS related groups and boards in my community, I have also testified in front of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee in September 2018. I have met in person with two Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) Administrators (Scott Pruitt in 2018 and Michael Regan in 2021). I also received the EPA's national award for citizen excellence in community involvement in 2018. And in 2019, I gave a TEDx talk titled "PFAS and a Mother's Journey to Becoming A Clean Water Advocate".

### **National PFAS Contamination Coalition Meeting with Mr Richard Kidd:**

The National PFAS Contamination Coalition (NPCC) formed in June 2017 at the first national PFAS conference in Boston by community leaders concerned about PFAS contamination. The NPCC membership is comprised of 40 community groups in 17 different states. In May 2021, three leadership team members from the National PFAS Contamination Coalition, met with Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Environment and Energy Resilience, Mr. Richard Kidd, to discuss key concerns of PFAS communities where the Department of Defense (DoD) was the polluter. Some of the key areas of concern and proposed solutions we offered for improvement during our meeting with Mr. Kidd are:

Concern: DoD is responsible for PFAS at hundreds sites across the nation and at some of the highest detectable levels of PFAS.

Proposed Solution: DoD leadership should adopt a more progressive, forward leaning vision and implement systematic change to address existing PFAS contamination and prevent further exposure.

Concern: DoD is not prioritizing enough funding to address PFAS action and clean up.

Proposed Solution: DoD should make PFAS a priority and request additional funding, in a streamlined way, needed for its remediation and clean up.

Concern: DoD is not moving quickly enough to address comprehensive PFAS investigations and remediation, at both active and closed military installations.

Proposed Solution: DoD should establish a realistic plan and timeline for comprehensive clean up efforts regarding PFAS at both active and closed military installations. DoD must focus not only on drinking water impacts, but also impacts to wildlife, agriculture, food sources, air, and natural resources.

Concern: DoD has interfered with other federal agencies working on PFAS (i.e. EPA, ATSDR).

Proposed Solution: DoD should not be interfering with other federal agencies (i.e. EPA, ATSDR, etc.) working on PFAS.

Concern: DoD is not complying with State PFAS standards.

Proposed Solution: In the absence of EPA MCLs on PFAS, DoD should be made to comply with state drinking water standards that are set for the protection of public health.

Example: In my state of New Hampshire, our state environmental agency set maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) for 4 PFAS in drinking water. Despite DoD spending millions to remediate PFAS in my community, there were private wells around the former base with PFAS levels above the New Hampshire state MCLs, but below the EPA advisory and DoD would not supply alternative water to these homes despite advocacy from the community, the governor, and our Congressional delegation. Moreover, since PFAS is persistent and mobile in ground water, DOD should adopt a more preventive approach and stop the spread of PFAS before the contamination reaches high levels in drinking water.

Concern: DoD continues to use firefighting foam containing PFAS.

Proposed Solution: DoD should stop using firefighting foams containing PFAS and establish a safe storage plan for AFFF until proper disposal techniques are identified.

Concern: DoD contracts with companies that create firefighting gear impregnated with high levels of PFAS that add to the PFAS burden in military firefighters.

Proposed Solution: DoD should stop using firefighting gear impregnated with PFAS and instead implement PFAS-free gear.

Concern: DoD knew of the harms of PFAS decades ago and did not stop the use of AFFF or take proactive measures to stop exposure at hundreds of military installations across the nation.

Proposed Solution: DoD should own its responsibility in this widespread issue and take full accountability for the harm it has caused to service members, civilians, host communities, and the environment.

Concern: DoD is eroding community trust and undermining their civilian respect for the military throughout the country.

Proposed Solution: DoD should recognize the immense public health issue and national security threat it has caused by PFAS contamination with many significant long-term implications.

Concern: DoD is lacking in respect, transparency, and integrity in their interactions with communities.

Proposed Solution: DoD should establish respectful, professional, and collaborative relationships with impacted communities founded in honesty, trust, and transparency.

Concern: DoD is not prioritizing community relationships and engagement.

Proposed Solution: DoD leadership should commit to ongoing community engagement via monthly calls and listening sessions with impacted communities so community members feel valued and part of the process.

**DoD Inspector General Report:**

The DoD Inspector General (IG) Report from July 2021 on the Evaluation of the Department of Defense's Actions to Control Contaminant Effects from Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances at Department of Defense Installations had some troubling findings.

Most notably, the DoD IG report found that the DoD waited until 2016 to begin to protect service members -- five years after issuing a "risk alert" in 2011. DoD failed to take an "enterprise-wide" approach to protecting service members from all sources of PFAS, not just the use of PFAS in fire-fighting foam, in violation of DoD policies. And failed to track the results of blood testing of military firefighters, in violation of DoD policies.

One of the questions raised in the letter from members of Congress when requesting the IG review DoD's use of PFAS at military sites is when did the DoD first know PFAS was harmful. That question was never addressed in the IG's report, but publicly available Navy and Air Force documents dating as far back as the 1970's show DoD knew that AFFF was toxic.

DoD's role in causing widespread contamination of toxic and persistent forever chemicals is not one we can white wash or gloss over. There are serious failures in responsibility and accountability from DoD over the last four decades on PFAS and we need a deeper dive into what went wrong so we can make sure a public health and environmental devastation on this scale can never happen again. We also need accountability and full responsibility taken from current DoD leadership to quickly address the issue and prevent ongoing harm and exposure to impacted communities, service members, and their families. .

### **PFAS Community Needs:**

My role as a national PFAS advocate has given me a lot of perspective on this massive environmental and public health issue facing our nation. Regardless of the source of PFAS in contaminated communities --whether it is military sites like my community in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, industry contamination caused by St. Gobain Plastics Performance in Merrimack, New Hampshire, or in occupational exposures in our nation's first responders -- impacted communities generally want the same action:

Communities want PFAS contamination cleaned up by the polluter or responsible party in a comprehensive and efficient way. And we want the polluter to pay, not the communities. Communities currently absorb the significant costs associated with PFAS exposure (buying bottled water, installing home filtration, paying for PFAS blood tests, loss in property value, loss wages from sickness, cost of healthcare to manage chronic illnesses and diseases).

Communities want immediate access to clean water to drink, cook, and bathe with. Due to lack of federal regulations, communities are often left on their own to buy bottled water or install and maintain filtration systems in their homes to have access to clean water. Many community members cannot afford access to bottled water or filtration systems which means they continue to be exposed to a mixture of unregulated PFAS chemicals in their drinking water.

Communities want access to PFAS blood tests that help quantify the amount of PFAS in their blood. And communities want access to medical monitoring guidance and informed local physicians who can develop a plan to monitor their health over time for adverse health effects.

PFAS blood tests are not typically covered by insurance and community members wanting to know the levels of PFAS in their blood have to find a lab and pay out of pocket for these tests. Physicians are generally not trained in environmental health during medical school and many healthcare providers do not know potential health effects associated with PFAS exposure. The lack of knowledge on PFAS creates barriers for impacted communities in obtaining PFAS blood tests and establishing a plan to monitor their health over time.

Communities want the ongoing PFAS health studies to help address their questions about how PFAS contamination has and/or will impact their health in the short and long term. Currently the burden is on communities to prove that PFAS has caused harm to their health. And the science on PFAS continues to rapidly evolve. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's (ATSDR) Pease Study and Multi Site Health Studies are two good examples of PFAS human health studies that will hopefully provide answers to impacted communities about potential health effects. Our government needs to continue to prioritize studies like these to provide answers to communities about potential adverse health effects.

Communities want PFAS banned from consumer products (food packaging, cosmetics, clothing, etc) to prevent ongoing exposure. Almost all of these products are not labeled to inform consumers when they are purchasing products with PFAS in them. And given the highly persistent and toxic nature of PFAS, we need to re-examine essential uses for PFAS and ban them from products where they are not essential.

First responders want access to turn out gear and firefighting foams that will not add to their already substantial chemical exposure as part of their occupation. First responders are already at risk to cancers and other medical conditions due to the nature of their job.

Most importantly, PFAS impacted communities want regulations in place to safeguard them from ongoing and future exposure to PFAS. And communities want to prevent this kind of devastation from happening to future generations.

**Conclusion:**

A major issue I see is that there is a historical lack of leadership from DoD to seriously prioritize the massive PFAS issues they have caused across our nation. Congress and the Administration need to address this historical neglect, and begin treating this environmental and public health issue with a sense of urgency. The IG report was one step in the right direction in identifying the shortcomings of DoD's role in the PFAS crisis our nation is facing, but it did not go far enough to thoroughly identify the significant missteps and inaction taken by our largest and most powerful department in this country. If we don't dive deeper in the past to fully understand the mistakes made that has contaminated millions of Americans in this country, we are doomed to repeat them again.

For far too long PFAS chemicals have been given the benefit of the doubt over public health, while millions of Americans have been exposed and continued to be exposed to a mixture of

chemicals we can't even quantify. Sadly, the burden has been placed on the victims of this contamination to prove they have been harmed by PFAS. Our government has failed us at many levels with the lack of safe chemical regulations, lack of drinking water standards, by continuing to allow new PFAS onto the market despite knowing the long term effects, and the lack of holding polluters accountable. It is time to prioritize human health and safety over the use of a class of forever chemicals that will have long lasting impacts for generations to come.