



## Testimony on Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

**Mark Johnson, Deputy Director**

Good Morning, Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman and members of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today to share Ohio's perspective on the challenges and opportunities associated with addressing PFAS contaminants. My name is Mark Johnson, and I am the Deputy Director of Business and Regulatory Affairs for the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. I assisted in the development of Ohio's PFAS Action Plan for Drinking Water, which was implemented under the direction of Governor Mike DeWine.

As you are aware, Ohio and states nationwide are faced with challenges related to PFAS. PFAS is the common term for a large family of chemicals, totaling in the thousands, which have been manufactured and used for years in everyday items such as nonstick cookware, water resistant clothing, and personal care products. PFAS chemicals were also historically used in firefighting foams. These chemicals can be found in the environment because they have been widely used over many years and are long-lasting chemicals that break down very slowly over time in the environment.

Recognizing the need to take a closer look at potential PFAS risks in Ohio, in September 2019, Governor Mike DeWine announced the establishment of an inter-agency workgroup to address the emerging issue of PFAS for the protection of natural resources and public health. In his announcement, he directed the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) and Ohio Department of Health (ODH) to develop a statewide PFAS action plan to gather data to assist in identifying, responding to, and communicating PFAS-related drinking water risks in Ohio.

The action plan highlighted several objectives, including:

- establishing Action Levels for drinking water systems in Ohio for six common PFAS compounds to aid in appropriately responding to potential PFAS contamination.
- gathering sampling data from specific types of public water systems to determine if PFAS was present in drinking water;
- working with public water systems in implementing appropriate response measures, preventative, and long-term measures to reduce PFAS-related risks;
- working in partnership with health departments to provide private water system owners with information and resources to identify and respond to potential PFAS contamination; and
- developing and disseminating educational information to the public to increase awareness and understanding of PFAS-related compounds and relative risk of exposure to PFAS through drinking water and other exposure pathways.

During 2020, under the Action Plan, Ohio EPA coordinated sampling at almost 1,550 public water systems that supply water to cities, mobile home parks, schools, and daycares. In total, these systems provide water to approximately 90 percent of Ohio's population. To ensure that Ohio was prioritizing the most vulnerable populations during our sampling efforts, approximately 240 schools and daycares were included in our first phase of sampling.

It was important for Ohio to be both transparent in our efforts and keep the public informed. To accomplish this, all sample results were made available on Ohio's PFAS website. This data is still available and accessible through an interactive map on our website. We were also proactive in communicating the results of our sampling results, particularly in situations where samples revealed PFAS detections, as I will touch on later in this testimony. In circumstances where initial results indicated PFAS chemicals present at elevated levels, Ohio EPA worked with the public water system to immediately collect a confirmation sample for analysis at Ohio EPA's laboratory to validate the accuracy of initial sample results.

The sampling initiative was a significant undertaking and took close to a year to complete. The good news is that through these efforts, Ohio EPA determined that nearly 94 percent of the public drinking water systems tested revealed no detection of PFAS compounds.

Two public water systems had detections above Ohio's Action Levels, both of which implemented immediate measures to ensure safe drinking water for their consumers. One system has permanently connected to an alternate source of public drinking water as a long-term solution. The second system is currently in the process of connecting to an alternate source of drinking water as a long-term solution.

We did identify low levels of PFAS compounds in six percent of the systems; however, these levels were well below the current U.S. EPA health advisory levels and Ohio's action levels. Ohio EPA is working closely with these systems to collect additional data to monitor the levels of PFAS and ensure that appropriate response measures are taken by these systems to minimize public health risks.

One important component of our Action Plan included outreach and education. Ohio EPA and the ODH worked together to develop educational information about PFAS, including fact sheets on potential exposure, health effects, and drinking water treatment options. These materials, including an educational video for homeowners from ODH, have also been posted on Ohio's PFAS website ([pfas.ohio.gov](https://pfas.ohio.gov)).

We created a PFAS toolkit, including letter templates for our public water systems to use in communicating with their customers. Our partners at both the ODH and local health departments were instrumental in conducting outreach and providing information to private well owners in proximity to public water systems with PFAS detections.

With the completion of this statewide sampling initiative, we believe that Ohio now joins the ranks of only a handful of other states that have taken on such a comprehensive approach to analyzing public drinking water systems. We now have very important data that can help us as we work with our public water systems to ensure they can continue to provide safe drinking water to their customers and prepare for compliance with future regulations.

We not only greatly appreciate the leadership and support from Governor DeWine, but also appreciate your leadership in recognizing the importance of supporting states in their efforts to address emerging contaminants such as PFAS including the appropriation of infrastructure dollars to support PFAS contamination in Ohio. We believe it's important to have a strong federal regulatory framework that provides consistent standards that states can look to when developing their PFAS programs.

In October 2021, U.S. EPA released their PFAS roadmap. This Roadmap represents a significant step toward regulating PFAS nationwide. Additionally in November 2021, U.S. EPA submitted technical reports for PFOA and PFAS to the Science Advisory Board (SAB) for review in order to revise the Health Advisory Level for PFOA and PFAS. Ohio EPA is closely following these efforts and strongly supports the development of national drinking water standards. Your work in this area, including efforts to help accelerate the development of standards and regulations, is much appreciated.

And, while our efforts under Ohio's PFAS Action Plan have been focused on ensuring safe drinking water, we recognize that it is also important to develop national standards and a regulatory framework to address PFAS contamination in other areas, including setting standards for clean-up and remediation. To this end, we would also like to thank you for the funding support that has been provided to the nation's defense installations to help identify and address legacy PFAS contamination.

We very much appreciate the opportunity to share our work on PFAS in Ohio as part of today's testimony. We will continue to stay engaged on this very important topic and look forward to continued dialogue as we work together in addressing our PFAS challenges. I am happy to answer any questions you have at the conclusion of testimony from the panel.