



RHODE ISLAND MEDICAL SOCIETY

Honorable David Bennett
Chair
House Environment & Natural Resources Committee
Room 135
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: 24H 7356

SUPPORT (FOR)

March 21, 2024

Dear Chairman Bennett,

The Rhode Island Medical Society respectfully offers the following testimony in support of H 7356, An Act Relating to Health and Safety -- Comprehensive PFAS Ban Act Of 2024. The bill would prohibit the intentional addition of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances of PFAS in products offered for sale or manufactured in the state as of January 1, 2027.

The presence of PFAS in everyday products and their resultant accumulation in the human body and environment have been linked to significant health risks. Peer-reviewed studies and clinical observations within our medical community have documented the association between prolonged PFAS exposure and a range of severe health outcomes, including increased incidences of testicular and kidney cancers, thyroid disease, and adverse reproductive outcomes such as miscarriage and preeclampsia. Furthermore, the immune-suppressive qualities of PFAS compounds, particularly concerning amid a global health landscape that has been challenged like never before, underscore the urgent need for legislative action.

The Comprehensive PFAS Ban Act of 2024 ambitiously seeks to eliminate the intentional addition of PFAS in a wide array of products by January 1, 2027. This includes not only consumer goods such as cookware, cosmetics, and apparel but also extends critical protections to our first responders by phasing out PFAS in firefighting foam and personal protective equipment. Moreover, the bill's provisions for mandatory public disclosure of PFAS in products not covered by the ban will empower consumers with the information necessary to make safer choices, thereby driving demand for non-PFAS alternatives.

The phased approach to the ban acknowledges the complexities of transitioning away from PFAS while allowing for the development and adoption of safer alternatives. This transition is not only a public health imperative but an opportunity to lead in the innovation of sustainable and non-toxic products.

As healthcare professionals, we witness firsthand the consequences of PFAS exposure on human health. It is our duty and moral obligation to advocate for measures that protect the health of our patients and communities. The passage of the Comprehensive PFAS Ban Act of 2024 will be a critical victory in this endeavor. In 2022, RIMS established a Climate Change & Health Committee bringing RI physicians together to share their experiences on caring for patients affected by climate change and advocating for climate change mitigation legislation.

We commend Representative Cortvriend for her leadership and foresight in introducing this bill and respectfully urge all members of the committee to support its passage. Together, we can make a lasting impact on the health and safety of our citizens and environment.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing public health issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heather Smith", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Heather Smith, MD, MPH
President