

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 24, 2019

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dr. Robert R. Redfield, M.D.
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road SE
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Administrator Wheeler and Director Redfield:

I am writing to request that you respond to environmental contamination caused by per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) with more urgency. The scope of PFAS contamination is expanding, with new areas of contamination discovered regularly. The problem is growing, but your actions have failed to reflect the seriousness of this threat.

Multiple communities in Wisconsin are facing PFAS water contamination, including the Town of Peshtigo, Wisconsin, and surrounding areas. The groundwater in this community has some of the highest levels of PFAS contamination in the nation as a result of years of manufacturing and open testing of firefighting foams. Earlier this month, I held a meeting with community leaders in this area who are advocating for public and private action address the contamination of their soil and water. Representatives from state environmental and public health agencies were also present to share the actions the State of Wisconsin is taking to respond to PFAS contamination. I invited and encouraged staff from both CDC and EPA to attend, but both agencies declined.

I heard from both scientists and local residents at the meeting about the importance of knowing where contamination is present in order to protect residents in the short term by stopping exposure to PFAS chemicals. Right now, environmental testing is expensive and sample collection must be conducted by someone with technical expertise to ensure accurate results. I call upon the EPA to urgently invest in developing technologies and protocols that allow communities and individuals to test for PFAS more easily and inexpensively. This will allow more people to know the status of the water they drink, particularly the 40 percent of Wisconsinites who rely on private wells.

I also heard concerns about a lack of information regarding the health consequences of PFAS contamination. It is critical for residents to know the scope of contamination and status of their drinking water. However, knowing about PFAS exposure without having reliable information on the health implications of that exposure is unhelpful and frightening. Doctors do not have the information they need to provide actionable medical advice to those who have been exposed to PFAS, and this is unacceptable. Therefore, I urge the CDC to prioritize research on how PFAS exposure affects human health.

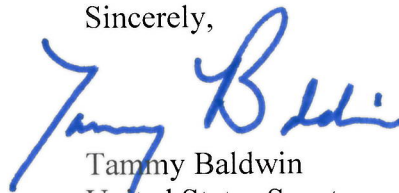
I am calling upon EPA and CDC to urgently pursue research that advances environmental testing technology and improves scientific understanding of how PFAS affect human health. These two research goals are closely related. Therefore, it is essential that your agencies closely collaborate as you carry out this critical mission.

In addition to these requests for immediate action, I am asking that you provide answers to the following questions:

- Do CDC and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) currently have reliable scientific information to advise medical professionals on the health implications of PFAS exposure?
- What actions are CDC and ATSDR taking to increase scientific knowledge of how PFAS chemicals affect human health?
- In February 2019, the EPA announced it was moving forward with setting an enforceable Maximum Contaminant Level for two PFAS chemicals—PFOA and PFOS. When will this process be completed?
- How are the CDC and EPA collaborating to assist states and communities in understanding the need for environmental PFAS testing and the health risks of PFAS exposure?

Thank you for your work to develop tools to identify contamination and provide doctors and the public actionable information on the threat PFAS chemicals pose to human health.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator