



## OFFICE OF SENATOR SABINA FLORES PEREZ

Chairperson

Committee on Environment, Revenue and Taxation, and Procurement

*I MINA'TRENTAI SINGKO NA LIHESLATURAN GUÁHAN*

35<sup>TH</sup> GUAM LEGISLATURE

### PRESS RELEASE

#### **Senator Perez Introduces Bill to Regulate Toxic PFAS in Drinking Water**

*Guam, June 28, 2019* – On Friday, Senator Sabina Perez introduced Bill 174-35 to regulate per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water. The bill is co-sponsored by Senator Therese Terlaje and Vice-Speaker Telena Nelson.

Also known as “forever chemicals,” Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large family of toxic, synthetic compounds that are found in a wide range of products and industries, including but not limited to food packaging, firefighting foam, water-resistant clothing, electronics, construction, and automotive applications. PFAS are extremely persistent in the environment and in the human body due to their strong chemical composition, mobility, and widespread use. They are resistant to most environmental degradation processes, and bioaccumulate over time.

Scientific studies suggest that exposure to PFAS can lead to adverse human health effects, including increased cholesterol levels, decreased fertility among women, developmental effects on infants, effects on the immune system, cancer, and thyroid hormone disruption.

Common sources of PFAS contamination are Department of Defense installations, airports, fire training/fire response sites, industrial sites, landfills, and wastewater plants/biosolids. Resulting environmental contamination from these sites create additional PFAS exposure pathways through contaminated drinking water, contaminated soil and dust ingestion, and consumption of plants and animals that contain PFAS.

“Contaminated drinking water poses a particular threat, as vulnerable populations such as children, breast feeding or pregnant women, and babies drink more water and are the most susceptible to bioaccumulation,” said Senator Perez. PFAS can be transmitted to fetuses through blood in the umbilical cord, and to infants through breastmilk.

Between 2014 and 2015, Guam wells were tested for PFAS under the USEPA’s Third Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR3). Of these wells, six tested positive for significant levels of two types of PFAS—PFOS and/or PFHxS. In 2016, significant levels of PFOS were detected in five wells upon resampling, and GWA shut down three of these wells (wells NAS-1, A-23, and A-25) due to particularly high PFOS levels. NAS-1 is located in Tiyan at the AB Won Pat International Airport and former Naval Air Station Agaña, with A-23 and A-25 in near proximity. Currently, NAS-1 is operational with a new filtration system, and A-23 and A-25 remain offline. GWA continues to monitor and filter for PFOS, and it has shut down affected wells until they can be properly filtered.



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In 2016, the USEPA revised their drinking water health advisory level (HAL) for PFAS at 70 ppt, or 70 ng/L. However, the USEPA's HAL is non-enforceable, and the USEPA is in the process of establishing more stringent regulations for PFAS—a process that may take several years. Many states including New Jersey, Vermont, Michigan, and Connecticut have undertaken aggressive action to address PFAS in the absence of federal regulations, and they have adopted PFAS response levels based on the USEPA's HAL or on their interpretations of various scientific studies. "We cannot rely on the federal government to regulate these chemicals swiftly; we must take action to prevent further PFAS exposure," said Senator Perez.

Bill 174-35 sets a maximum contaminant level (MCL) for six PFAS commonly found in drinking water at 0.00007 mg/L, or 70 ng/L, for all community water systems and non-transient, non-community water systems. The PFAS that will be regulated are PFOS, PFOA, PFNA, PFHxS, PFHpA, and PFBS. "By establishing a maximum contaminant level, or legal threshold limit for PFAS, we are ensuring that these chemicals are monitored and reduced in our drinking water," said Senator Perez. The bill also requires owners and operators of public water systems to issue public notices to persons who are served by systems affected by PFAS, regardless of whether or not the MCL has been violated.

"This bill is a collaborative effort between our office and various agencies over the last few months. Regulating PFAS contamination in our drinking water will require further inter-agency collaboration and public involvement on all fronts," said Senator Perez.

"PFAS are a major health and environmental concern whose impact is not only local or national, but global as well. Bill 174-35 is the crucial step to mitigate these chemicals and protect the most vulnerable members of our community," she added.

Bill 174-35 is the second bill to address the threat of PFAS on Guam. On Friday, the Legislature's Committee on Rules introduced Bill No. 1 (1-S) at the Governor's request, authorizing Guam's Attorney General to hire specialized legal services to litigate PFAS manufacturers. "I support the Governor in her efforts to explore legal action against PFAS manufacturers. We must hold accountable these corporations for exposing our community to preventable health risks," said Senator Perez.

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