

12TH DISTRICT
STATE SENATOR
MARIA COLLETT
SENATE BOX 203012
THE STATE CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-3012
717-787-6599
FAX: 717-783-7328

NORTH WALES OFFICE
GWYNEDD CORPORATE CENTER
1180 WELSH ROAD • SUITE 130
NORTH WALES, PA 19454
215-368-1429
FAX: 215-368-2374

WARMINSTER OFFICE
1410 W. STREET ROAD • SUITE A
WARMINSTER, PA 18974
215-674-1246
FAX: 215-674-1361



Senate of Pennsylvania

COMMITTEES
AGING & YOUTH AFFAIRS
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COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
JUDICIARY
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
RULES & EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS
EMAIL: senatorcollett@pasenate.com
WEBSITE: www.SenatorCollett.com
FACEBOOK: @SenatorCollett
TWITTER: @SenatorCollett
INSTAGRAM: @SenatorCollett



April 27, 2022

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
Environmental Quality Board (EQB)
P.O. Box 8477
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8477

RE: Proposed Rulemaking: Safe Drinking Water PFAS MCL Rule (#7-569)

Dear Board Members:

I represent Pennsylvania's 12th Senatorial district, the epicenter of Pennsylvania's PFAS water-contamination crisis. My district includes the townships of Horsham, Warminster, Warrington and other communities surrounding three military installations – the active Biddle Air Guard Station, the decommissioned Willow Grove Joint Reserve Base, and the decommissioned Naval Air Warfare Center Warminster – each of which regularly used massive quantities of firefighting foams containing dangerous per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) for decades. These chemicals contaminated the groundwater, wells, and drinking water of hundreds of thousands of past and current residents of my district, as well as that of the countless military and civil employees who worked at these bases over the years.

Back in the 1930s and 1940s, PFAS were thought to be miracle materials because of their ability to withstand extreme temperatures and resist water, grease, corrosion, and even UV rays. One of the most well-known of these chemicals, Teflon, became synonymous with its impervious strength to withstand just about anything. Two of the strongest (and most dangerous) PFAS are PFOA and PFOS. In 2014, PFOA and PFOS were first detected in Horsham, Warminster and Warrington during routine water testing with levels in the thousands of parts per trillion (PPT). For perspective, the EPA's (unenforceable) lifetime health advisory limit for these chemicals is 70 PPT. A water sample taken from the Biddle Air Guard Station contained the highest level of PFOS *ever* detected in drinking water. By 2015, these wells were being taken offline and the affected communities were getting clean drinking water from other sources, albeit at high premiums. Since that time, state grants have helped offset some of the costs to ratepayers and have allowed local water authorities to invest in state-of-the-art filtration systems and begin bringing their wells back online. But that money is coming out of our pockets, and not the pockets of the polluters. This proposed rulemaking is a necessary and crucial first step toward holding polluters accountable.

Setting maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) for these toxic chemicals is long overdue. That's why, immediately upon taking office in 2019, I introduced legislation to (1) set interim MCLs of 10 parts per trillion (PPT) for PFOA, PFOS and other PFAS until such time as an MCL is established by this Board, the EPA or the Governor, and (2) formally classify PFAS as "hazardous substances" under the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Act.

Given all this, I am encouraged that we have finally reached this juncture and **I strongly support this proposed rulemaking.**

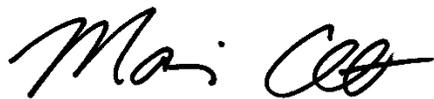
Too often in government, the pursuit of perfection becomes the death knell of the good. We cannot allow that to happen here. The stakes are much too high. While I share the concerns voiced by some of my colleagues, constituents and environmental organizations that this proposed rulemaking, which would set MCLs of 14 PPT for PFOA and 18 PPT for PFOS, does not go far enough – and I urge you to take their feedback under advisement – I believe that establishing *any* MCL will arm us with powerful tools that have been sorely lacking. Without enforceable MCLs, the communities in and around my district continue to pay steep premiums for clean drinking water. Without enforceable MCLs, over 1,600 acres of contaminated soil at the military bases in my district remains largely untouched. And without enforceable MCLs, Pennsylvania’s polluters escape accountability while people suffer.

Time is of the essence here. We know that long-term exposure to PFAS is linked to a host of serious health risks, including male and female infertility, high cholesterol, ulcerative colitis, thyroid disorders, endocrine dysfunction, and certain types of cancer (including testicular, kidney, and bladder). Because remediation at the military bases in my district has been slow and sporadic, migrating plumes of contaminated ground water put more people at risk with each passing day. Indeed, the most recently reported test results still show surface water runoff from the Biddle Air Guard Station contains PFAS in the *thousands* of parts per trillion.

While it is far from comprehensive, this proposed rulemaking establishing MCLs for PFOA and PFOS is an overdue, necessary step in protecting our health, our environment and our future.

Thank you for your work on this important issue.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maria Collett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Maria" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Collett".

Senator Maria Collett
12th Senatorial District