

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 15, 2018

The Honorable Scott Pruitt  
Administrator  
Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Pruitt,

We are writing in response to a troubling report<sup>1</sup> that officials from the White House, Office of Management and Budget, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Defense (DOD) intervened in order to delay the release of a study by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) concerning the health effects of perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The unreleased HHS assessment reportedly concludes that those chemicals pose a danger to human health at a far lower level than EPA has previously said was safe. If this report is accurate and administration officials sought to suppress release of critical public health information in the interest of avoiding a “public relations nightmare,” it is an unacceptable failure of leadership and a failure to protect public health.

Perfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, are a class of toxic chemicals affecting communities across the nation. These chemical substances are linked to certain cancers and other serious adverse health effects. They are often used to manufacture products like fabric protectors, firefighting foam, and stain repellents due to rigorous chemical properties that also make them persistent in the environment and resistant to degradation.

ATSDR is directed by Congressional mandate to perform specific functions concerning the effect on public health of hazardous substances in the environment, including health consultations concerning specific hazardous substances. According to internal EPA emails that were released to the Union of Concerned Scientists under the Freedom of Information Act, on January 30, 2018, a political appointee who oversees environmental issues at the White House Office of Management and Budget, forwarded an email from another White House aide about the ATSDR’s PFAS report to the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) top financial officer, which stated:

*“The public, media, and Congressional reaction to these numbers is going to be huge... The impact to EPA and DoD is going to be extremely painful. We (DoD and EPA) cannot seem to get ATSDR to realize the potential public relations nightmare this is going to be.”*

The ATSDR report still has not been publicly released. Given the scope of the contamination nationwide and the ongoing exposure of communities across the United States to these chemicals, it is imperative that the public receive an opportunity to review the ATSDR report. Therefore, we request that you release the draft report immediately. We also request that you

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/05/14/emails-white-house-interfered-with-science-study-536950>

provide our offices with all internal documents and communications in your agency's possession regarding any internal deliberations or discussion about this report within 10 business days.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to receiving your response soon.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



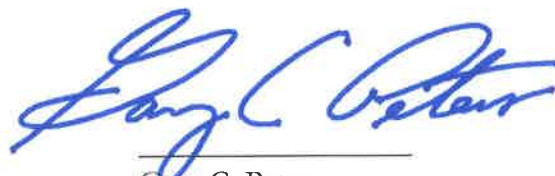
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator

*Maggie Hassan*

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Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator