

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 16, 2022

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin  
Secretary of Defense  
Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

We write with continued concern about the Department of Defense's (DoD) efforts to address contamination from per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Nearly 700 military installations nationwide have known or suspected PFAS contamination, exposing service members and their families, and civilian communities near DoD installations to these toxic chemicals<sup>1</sup>. Given Congress' continued commitment to provide funding to address PFAS contamination, we respectfully request that the Department similarly prioritize planning and programming for PFAS testing and remediation.

As you know, PFAS chemicals have emerged as widespread contaminants to the drinking water sources of military bases across the country largely due to their presence in aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) used by the military. Members of the military, veterans and civilians who have served at military installations and/or live in the surrounding communities found to have been contaminated with PFAS face health risks related to exposure to PFAS chemicals, as these materials are found in AFFF, in personal protective equipment used by firefighters and in standard consumer products. The prevalence of PFAS allows for multiple pathways for exposure. The recently released National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine report calls for expanded access to PFAS testing for Americans with a history of exposure to the chemicals and points to health risks such as high cholesterol, decreased fetal and infant growth and increased risks of kidney cancer for those exposed to PFAS<sup>2</sup>. These health concerns pose a significant hazard to the safety of our communities, and individuals either previously or currently exposed to toxic PFAS chemicals, underscoring the urgency of reducing exposure.

Over the past six years, Congress has increased funding by \$1 billion for the Department to accelerate PFAS testing and remediation, more than doubling the amount requested in the annual budget request during that time frame. As evidenced by the historic \$517 million authorization

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<sup>1</sup> United States Government Accountability Office. (June, 2021). DoD is Investigating PFAS and Responding to Contamination, but Should Report More Cost Information. Report to Congressional Committees. Retrieved from <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-421.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine. (July 28, 2022). *New Report Calls for Expanded PFAS Testing for People With History of Elevated Exposure, Offers Advice for Clinical Treatment*. National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine. Retrieved from <https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/2022/07/new-report-calls-for-expanded-pfas-testing-for-people-with-history-of-elevated-exposure-offers-advice-for-clinical-treatment>.

for PFAS-related activities included in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, Congress has indicated a willingness to provide even greater funding to address these challenges. We are, however, concerned that DoD has failed to adequately prepare for additional funding being made available. It is our understanding that one of the major obstacles in the way of Congress putting more resources toward this problem is a lack of planning by the Department on how to execute a higher funding level. Simply put, DoD is not sufficiently prioritizing PFAS testing, remediation and disposal as part of its annual budget process, nor is the Department adequately developing the appropriate plans to utilize even higher funding levels as provided by Congress.

DoD has a responsibility to place greater emphasis on addressing these pollutants impacting service members, military families and defense communities. Therefore, we strongly urge the Department to match Congress' urgency for addressing testing and remediation by developing requirements-based plans, policies, and programs and appropriately increasing DoD's annual budget requests for PFAS-related activities, including for PFAS destruction. Further, we expect that, as a part of this analysis, the Department will address past planning and programming deficiencies that DoD has claimed limits their ability to execute higher levels of funding, and we request that DoD provide a plan to Congress no later than upon the release of the President's Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2024 on how the Department is prepared to execute increased funding levels for PFAS-related activities. Finally, we support DoD's cooperation with the Environmental Protection Agency on PFAS, including collaboration on research and testing efforts, and encourage the Department to continue investing in joint efforts to address PFAS.

Our service members, military families, veterans and defense communities deserve the Department's full attention to appropriately address the scope and severity of PFAS contamination. We ask you to honor that responsibility and take the steps necessary to prioritize this hazard impacting our communities.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



M. Michael Rounds  
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator



Mike Braun  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

Maggie Hassan

Margaret Wood Hassan  
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Richard Blumenthal  
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Chris Van Hollen

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Ben Ray Lujan

Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand  
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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



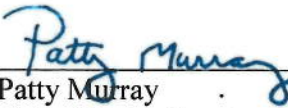
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Patty Murray  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
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Raphael Warnock  
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Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



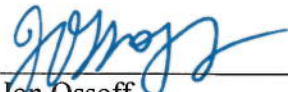
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Catherine Cortez Masto  
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Mark Kelly  
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Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



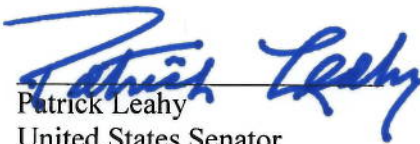
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Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

CC: The Honorable Shalanda Young, Director, Office of Management and Budget  
The Honorable William A. LaPlante, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and  
Sustainment, U.S. Department of Defense