

Environmental

Advocates

NY

July 30, 2020

Colleen Leonard
Executive Secretary
Public Health and Health Planning Council
Empire State Plaza, Corning Tower, Room 1805
Albany, NY 12237

Re: Statement to the NY Public Health and Health Planning Council on Maximum Contaminant Levels for PFOA, PFOS, and 1,4-Dioxane

Dear Madam Secretary,

My name is Rob Hayes, and I am the Clean Water Associate with Environmental Advocates NY. First, I want to thank the Council for meeting today under such difficult circumstances. I appreciate that the Council is taking action to protect clean water during a pandemic. Moving forward with new drinking water standards is essential to keep the public safe and healthy.

Emerging contaminants are one of the greatest threats to the safety of our drinking water. PFOA, PFOS, and 1,4-dioxane have polluted places like Hoosick Falls, Newburgh, and communities across Long Island. New Yorkers have these chemicals in their blood. Many have been diagnosed with devastating illnesses, while others are frightened about future cancers that will develop in themselves, their families, their friends, and their neighbors.

It seems that every month, a new study is published that confirms our worst fears about PFAS and 1,4-dioxane. The more that we learn about these chemicals, the more dangerous we realize they are. The science is clearer than ever that there is likely no safe level of these toxic substances in our drinking water.

That's why over 2,000 of EANY's advocates here throughout New York State have urged the Department of Health to set the most health-protective Maximum Contaminant Levels possible, at the lowest detectable and treatable levels.

We have urged the Department to strengthen their current proposal. At a minimum, we hope the Department sets a combined MCL for PFOA and PFOS. These chemicals pose cumulative health risks and are often found together in drinking water. Most public water systems in Nassau County, for example, have detected elevated levels of both PFOA and PFOS.

Importantly, setting a combined MCL for PFOA and PFOS is an important step towards regulating PFAS as a class. There are close to 5,000 PFAS that have been identified, with similar

molecular structures and detrimental health effects. If New York attempts to regulate them one by one, as time goes on many people will become sick from exposure. We recommend that the Department reviews these regulations on an annual basis to reflect the latest health science and treatment technology.

With these regulations in place, over two million New Yorkers will finally find out what's in their water. This is a major victory for the impacted communities that have fought for these protections for so many years. Public water systems will likely discover extensive contamination once testing begins, and communities across the state will have to install treatment technology to remove these chemicals. It is essential that New York steps up to meet this challenge, holding polluters accountable for their recklessness whenever possible. Protecting clean water and public health must be our state's top priority.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment before this important vote.

Sincerely,

Rob Hayes
Clean Water Associate
Environmental Advocates NY