



Connecting People with Nature

Audubon Society of Rhode Island

March 23, 2023

Representative David Bennett
Chair, House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02908

Re: Audubon Society of Rhode Island Supports H5673 Comprehensive PFAS Ban Act of 2023 and H5861 PFAS in Drinking Water, Groundwater, and Surface Water

Dear Chairman Bennett and members of the House Committee on Environment,

The Audubon Society of Rhode Island and our 17,000 members thank Representatives Cortvriend and Speakman for introducing these important pieces of legislation as well as all of the co-sponsors. We support H5673 and H5861 bills and urge you to pass them to the House floor for a vote.

PFAS chemicals are the newest collection of long-lasting, toxic, widely used chemicals that contaminate communities and drinking water supplies. Once PFAS is released into the environment, they do not break down, and they build up in the blood and organs of wildlife and humans. CDC's monitoring has shown that nearly all Americans have PFAS in their blood. These toxic chemicals shouldn't be near our food or our children. It is imperative that Rhode Island bans these dangerous PFAS chemicals that come from a range of products we use every day before these toxins can contaminate our bodies and the environment.

Where is the PFAS coming from? PFAS is used in food packaging, waterproof fabrics, non-stick pan coatings, firefighter foam, and other commonly used products—the more we look, the more PFAS we will find in commercial products. According to an article from October 2019, PFAS chemicals have been found in the water and soil in more than 1,300 communities in 49 states, including Rhode Island. Last year, the Rhode Island General Assembly responded to the lack of federal action by passing laws banning PFAS in food packaging and setting a maximum contaminant limit for PFAS in drinking water. These are great first steps, but until Rhode Island passes a more comprehensive ban on toxic PFAS, these chemicals will continue to contaminate our waterways and our bodies.

H5673 would 1) phase out the sale of residential carpets or rugs, fabric treatments, cosmetics, cookware, juvenile products, apparel including outdoor apparel, cleaning products, menstrual products, and artificial turf that contain intentionally added PFAS. 2) Phase out the use of PFAS chemicals in firefighting foam, which is a leading source of PFAS contamination, and moves the state towards phasing out firefighting personal protective equipment that contains PFAS, so we can protect first responders and our groundwater.

Audubon also supports H5861 because it is important that there is accountability and action when water supply systems that have PFAS contaminants exceeding the interim drinking water standard by requiring them to enter into a consent agreement with the RI Department of Health to implement treatment to reduce the levels of PFAS contaminants.

These are important steps to take that will continue to address public exposure to these dangerous chemicals.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Priscilla", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Priscilla De La Cruz
Senior Director of Government Affairs