



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife

Thursday, June 13, 2019

Testimony of Steve Sliver
Executive Director
Michigan PFAS Action Response Team

Good morning Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member McClintok, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for this time to discuss H.R. 1976, or the PFAS Detection Act of 2019. My name is Steve Sliver, and I am the Executive Director of the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team.

Thank you as well, Congressman Kildee and the co-sponsors of H.R. 1976, for your leadership to promote new advanced technologies to detect per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, and initiate a nationwide survey to better understand the occurrence of them in the environment. Michigan, as well as other states, needs national leadership on standards, and any federal assistance with the sampling of surface water, groundwater, and soil, would be very much appreciated!

PFAS are a class of over 5,000 chemicals that have carbon-fluorine bonds, one of the strongest bonds in chemistry. That strong bond gives them their unique and desirable characteristics of being highly stable and heat resistant. They can also help repel oil and water, reduce friction, facilitate the formation of foam, and disperse coatings across surfaces.

The use of PFAS is so widespread across everything from our personal care products to firefighting foams and industrial applications, that it is probably easier to list where PFAS are not used rather than where they are.

We are concerned because some PFAS tend to accumulate in the environment, in our bodies, and some have been associated with adverse health effects.

We recently began looking for up to 24 PFAS, and we only have limited health and environmental information on a just few of those. We have much to learn.

Interest in PFAS contamination began in Michigan with the discovery of very high levels of contamination in groundwater and surface water near military installations that used firefighting foam. The discovery of widespread contamination from the historic disposal of tannery wastes in Rockford grew that interest statewide.

As the extent of the challenge to understand the occurrence of the chemicals and how to address them became more clear, the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team, or MPART, was formed to ensure state agencies were communicating and coordinating an efficient and effective response.

Absent any federal protocols, one of the first things we did was develop our own sampling guidance, decide on analytical methods, and list the compounds to evaluate. The bill proposes the United States Geological Survey, or USGS, coordinate with the United States Environmental Protection Agency, or U.S. EPA, to develop a performance standard for the detection of PFAS across media. This will help ensure proper sampling and analysis of PFAS across the country, lead to new technologies that provide a more thorough evaluation of PFAS, and guide better investigations and public health responses.

MPART has coordinated the investigations of hundreds of known and suspected sites of PFAS contamination. We have this many because we are looking, not because we have more contamination than anyone else. The PFAS Detection Act will help prioritize sampling by the USGS near sites like these and identify additional sites across the country. That is the model MPART has used and it works for protecting public health and the environment. We have rapidly sampled private wells near these

contaminated sites and discovered several thousand Michiganders in need of alternate drinking water.

MPART is also systematically surveying our drinking water supplies and surface waters. This data helps us identify and protect residents who are exposed to unacceptably high concentrations of PFAS in their drinking water and to track down and eliminate discharges of PFAS into our waterways affecting our drinking water intakes and the fish we consume. The data also helps us understand the need for any new regulations like enforceable drinking water standards.

We know from statewide testing of all community water supplies that 97 percent do not have a PFAS contamination issue today. But all that testing did not cover everyone, including 25 percent of our residents on their private wells. Additional sampling by the USGS as described in this bill could provide much needed data on sources of PFAS contamination and broaden our coverage of the state's and nation's drinking water supply.

We appreciate the provision in the bill for the USGS to consult with the states. Michigan has a considerable amount of data. We also have protocols to use the best available science and data to drive our next steps in our investigations and surveys.

Our protocols include having a detailed plan for how to share and respond to the results, especially when testing drinking water. The USGS will get results that require a public health response. Planning for that now is important.

Lastly, this bill highlights the need for additional funding. Michigan alone has allocated an additional \$50 million over the past few years to investigate and remediate PFAS contamination.

On behalf of MPART, we look forward to further discussion on H.R. 1976. It can be an important vehicle to establish nationally recognized standards for the detection of PFAS and helping us better understand the occurrence of these chemicals throughout our environment.

Again, thank you! I look forward to your questions.

Steve Sliver

Steve Sliver was named Executive Director of the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART) in February 2019. He is responsible for coordinating Michigan's unique, multi-agency approach to address per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances contamination across the state. A 32-year veteran of state government, he is the former assistant director of the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) Waste Management and Radiological Protection Division, responsible for promoting recycling and waste utilization, pollution prevention, ensuring the proper management of materials under the hazardous waste and liquid industrial by-products, solid waste, scrap tire, medical waste, and e-waste programs, and protecting the public and environment from the hazards associated with radioactive materials. Steve obtained his bachelor's degree in environmental engineering from Michigan Technological University in 1985.