

# Phasing-out PFAS in Food Packaging at Top Grocery and Fast-food Chains

April 20, 2021

Liz Hitchcock, Director  
Safer Chemicals Healthy Families

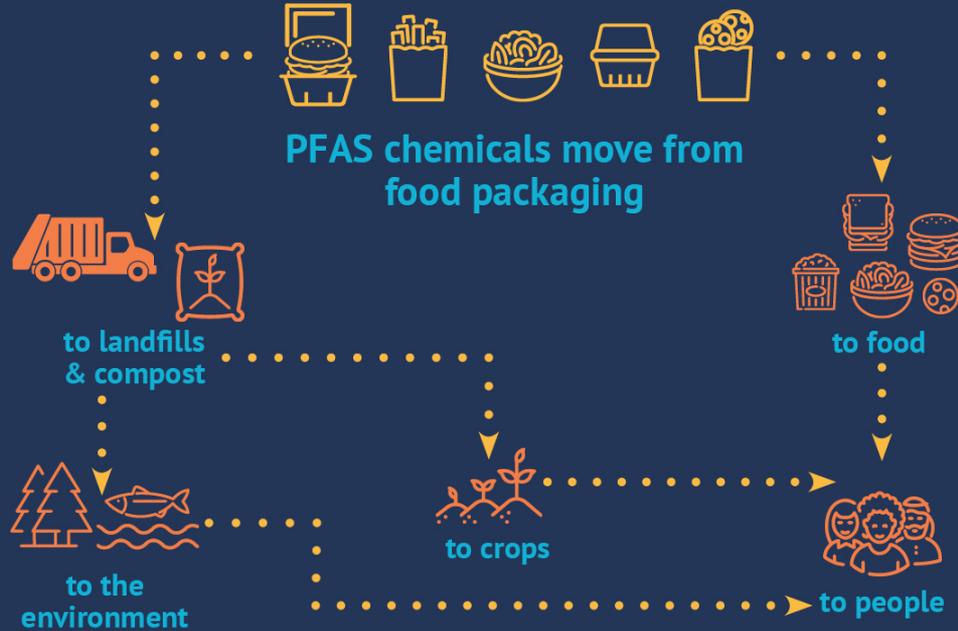


**No one's drinking water should be contaminated for Whopper wrappers!**



# How PFAS chemicals can move

from food packaging to people and the environment



TOXIC-FREE  
FUTURE



# Early-life PFAS Exposure

- Early-life exposure may lead to adverse effects later in life
- Breastfeeding is an important exposure pathway
- The last two studies on PFAS in breast milk from the U.S. mothers date back to 2004
- More recent studies from Asia have reported build up of the current-use PFAS

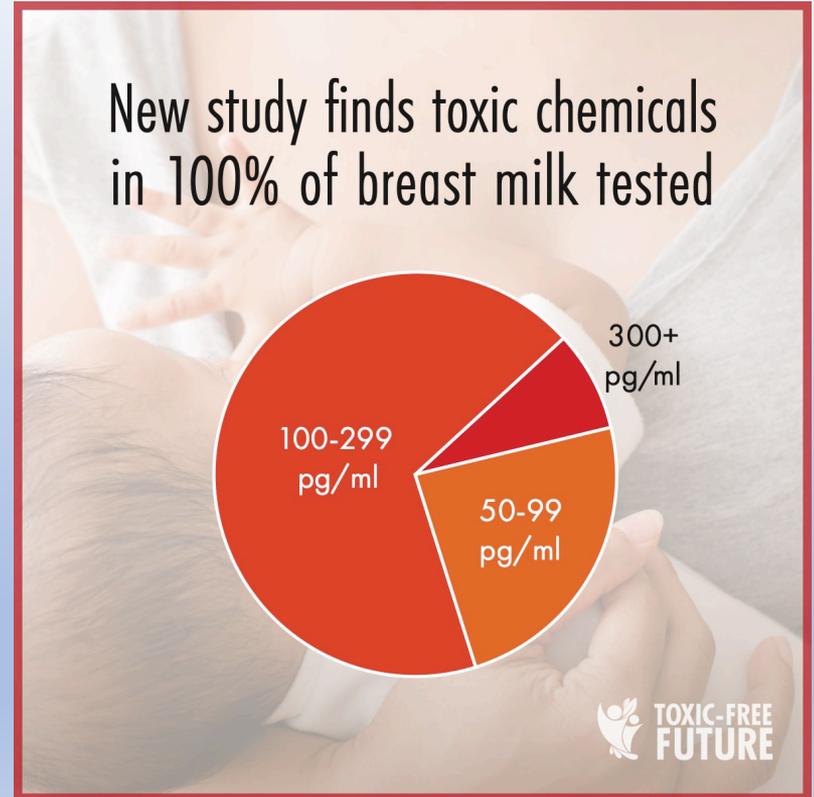


# PFAS in Breast Milk Study

- Recruited 50 first-time moms residing in and near Seattle, WA (2019)
- Outreach via parenting groups, social media, paper flyers
- Moms asked to manually express 50 ml into a provided glass container
- Researchers collected milk within 24 hours and maintained frozen until shipment for analysis

# Results

- PFAS detected in 100% of samples
- 16 PFAS total detected, 12 PFAS detected in more than 50% of samples
- $\Sigma$ PFAS ranged from 52 to 1,580 pg/mL



# Summary

- Both current-use and legacy PFAS are now abundant in milk from US mothers.
- While levels for legacy PFAS are going down, the detection of the current-use short-chain PFAS is going up.
- Consistent biomonitoring of breast milk is needed to be able to detect changes in exposure patterns.

# Messaging to New Moms

- Breastmilk is still best based on immune protection/reduced infection and associated with positive outcomes in newborns and infants
- There is no zero exposure
- Try to work on reducing overall environmental exposures
  - Fresh food diets
  - Take shoes off when entering home
  - Reduce processed food consumption
  - Use products low in toxic chemicals



# Messaging to New Moms



- Currently, no evidence based guidelines to reduce exposures (in other words, no studies that show certain guidance will actually reduce exposure)
- Nevertheless, we do know about sources of exposure:
  - Stain repellants on carpets/clothing/fabrics
  - Grease or oil based packaging for foods like pizza
  - Some non-stick coatings on pans

# Who's Minding the Store?

**NEW** 5th annual report card on retailer actions to eliminate toxic chemicals

SELECT A RETAILER

TAKE ACTION



## How retailers rank on tackling toxic chemicals

EXTRA CREDIT

	23.5 pts.	5 pts.	15 pts.	17.5 pts.	26 pts.	16 pts.	20 pts.	7.5 pts.	8.5 pts.	5 pts.	10 pts.	5 pts.	5 pts.	Total Score
	Policy	Oversight	Accountability	Disclosure	Action	Safer Alternatives	Transparency	Chemical Footprint	Third-party Standards	Joint Announcement	Continuous Improvement	Collaboration	Impact Investment	
 McDonald's	6.25	0	2.5	4	6	0	5	0	0	0	3	0	0	26.75 <b>D</b>
 Metro	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 <b>F</b>
 Nordstrom	2.5	0	2.5	0	0	2	5	0	1.5	0	0	0	0	13.5 <b>F</b>
 Office Depot	10	2.5	10	6	3	2	7.5	0	3	2.5	3	0	0	49.5 <b>C</b>
 Panera Bread	7.5	2.5	5	7	7.75	2	2.5	0	0	2.5	3	0	0	39.75 <b>C-</b>
 Publix	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 <b>F</b>
 REI	13.75	2.5	8.75	6	15	3.25	7.5	0	5.25	0	10	5	0	77 <b>B</b>
 Restaurant Brands International	4.5	0	1.25	0	0	0	2.5	0	0	0	3	0	0	11.25 <b>F</b>
 Rite Aid	16.5	2.5	9.5	9.5	17	4.5	10.5	3	0.75	5	6.5	0	0	85.25 <b>B+</b>

# Benchmarking and driving progress over time

## Average "Class" Grade in:

Retailers Graded for First Time	Number of Retailers	First Year Evaluated	Today
Class of 2018	12	F	D-
Class of 2017	19	D	C
<b>Class of 2016</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>D+</b>	<b>B-</b>

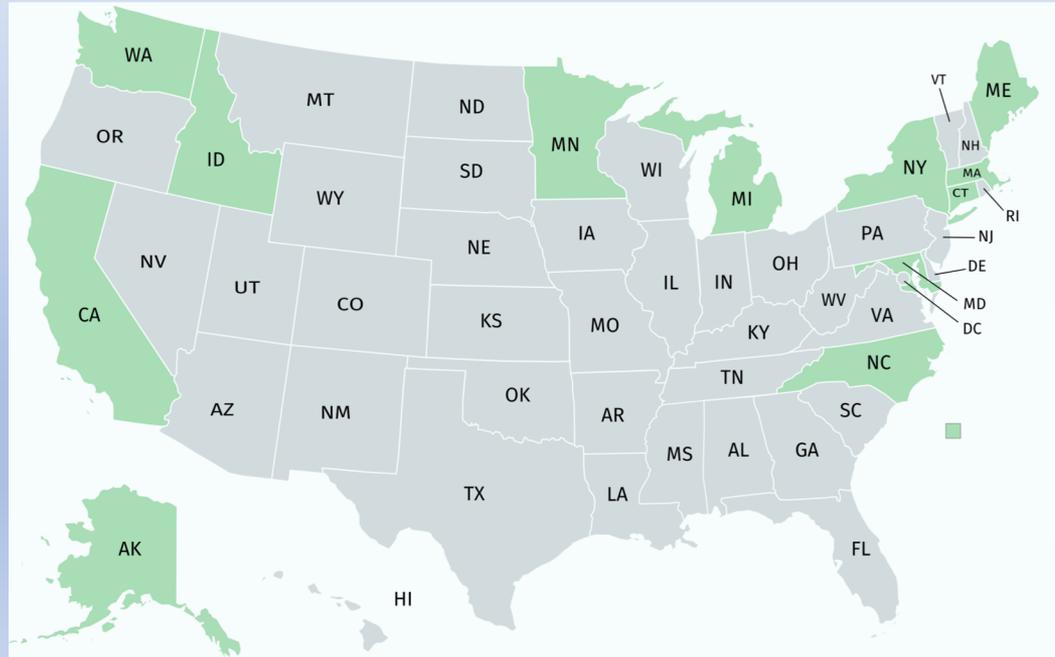
# 2018 report investigating PFAS in food packaging at top grocery chains



**TAKE OUT  
TOXICS**

PFAS CHEMICALS IN FOOD PACKAGING

Store locations for collection:  
20 stores in 12 states



# Results for “Take Out Toxics” report

Item category	Ahold Delhaize	Albertsons	Kroger	Trader Joe's	Whole Foods (Amazon)	TOTAL BY PRODUCT CATEGORY
Take-out container		0/2	1/1		4/5	5/8
Bakery or deli paper	1/6	1/7	1/11	0/6	1/8	4/38
Single-use plate	1/3	0/2	0/1	0/1		1/7
Tray for cook-at-home food	0/1	0/1	0/1	0/3	0/2	0/8
Baking or cooking supplies	0/4	0/5	0/4	0/2	0/2	0/17
TOTAL BY RETAILER	2/14	1/17	2/18	0/12	5/17	10/78





- **PFAS in food packaging**

- **First major North American grocery chain to publicly commit to remove PFAS from some food packaging, including take-out containers and deli/bakery paper**
- **Impacts ~ 100 million takeout food containers/year**
- **Rolled out molded fiber plates and bowls in all prepared foods departments in the U.S. and Canada that do not rely on PFAS**
- **Discontinued or reformulated any food service packaging where it was disclosed or determined that PFAS may have been intentionally added**



- “Trader Joe’s is asking its vendors to avoid the use of Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in packaging for our products.” (*Bloomberg News story*)



- Launched a **chemicals policy in the U.S.** (Food Lion, Stop & Shop, Giant, and Hannaford)
- **Three key chemical classes** (as well as other chemicals of concern)
  - PFAS
  - *ortho-phthalates*
  - Bisphenols



- Announced new **global sustainable packaging commitments**
- **Ban PFAS, phthalates and BPA** from “consumer-facing packaging”
- 2025 timeline
- First major fast-food chain to announce such a commitment



# Nearly half of tested food packaging items likely contained PFAS chemicals

Number of samples that tested above the fluorine screening level out of the total number tested in each category		Burger or sandwich		Fries, other fried items, or desserts		Salads, warm bowls, or other meals		
		WRAPPER	CARDBOARD CONTAINER	PAPER BAG	PAPERBOARD CONTAINER	MOLDED FIBER BOWL	MOLDED FIBER TRAY	
	7,000+ <sup>1</sup> stores	3 out of 8	● ○ ○ <sup>2</sup>		● ●	○ ○ ○		
	15,000+ <sup>1</sup> stores	3 out of 9	○ ○ ○ <sup>2</sup>	●	● ●	○ ○ ○		
	6,000+ <sup>1</sup> stores	1 out of 4	○ <sup>2</sup>		●	○ ○		
<b>CAVA</b>	100+ stores	4 out of 4	●		●	● <sup>2</sup>	●	
	300+ <sup>1</sup> stores	1 out of 2	○			● <sup>2</sup>		
sweetgreen	100+ stores	2 out of 2				● ● <sup>2</sup>		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>14</b> out of 29	● ● ○ ○ ○ ○	●	● ● ● ●	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	● ● ● ● ●	●

<sup>1</sup> Number of stores in the U.S. and Canada.

<sup>2</sup> We collected and tested more than one of the same kind of wrapper or bowl from different locations in the U.S., but are reporting each set as 1 to reflect the number of unique items. For details, see our methodology page.

# Positive tests: burger chains



# Positive tests: health-conscious chains



# MTS detailed step-by-step guidance for retailers



**A Guide for Grocery Chains:  
Banning PFAS in food-contact  
materials**



**A Guide for Quick-Service  
Restaurant Chains:  
Banning PFAS in  
food-contact materials**



Online at [MindTheStore.org](https://MindTheStore.org)

# Resources on alternatives

## PFAS-free Paper Food Packaging Alternatives

Many alternatives exist for paper food packaging and food serviceware products that do not contain intentionally added PFAS chemicals, and more are under development. This chart gives a sample of products on the market as of September 2020.



### Made From

### Plates

### Bowls

### Clamshells (Hinged Containers)

### Take-Out Boxes

Paper – Uncoated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AJM Packaging Nature's Own Green Label</li> <li>GP Pro Dixie Uncoated White Paper Plates</li> </ul>			
Paper with Clay Coating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dart Solo Symphony Paper Plates</li> <li>Emerald Farm to Paper Compostable Select Design Plates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dart Solo Symphony Paper Bowls</li> </ul>		
Paper with Petroleum-Based Plastic Coating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dixie Pathways Paper Plates with Soak-Proof Shield</li> <li>Dixie Ultra With Soak-Proof Shield Plates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dixie Paper Bowls with Soak-Proof Shield</li> <li>Eco-Products Evolution Soup Cups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dixie Pathways Paper Clamshells with Soak-Proof Shield</li> </ul>	
Paper with Bioplastic Coating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dart Solo Bare by Solo Eco-Forward Plates</li> <li>Transitions2earth Plates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eco-Products World Art and Green Stripe Soup Cups</li> <li>Graphic Packaging Ecotainer Food Container Soup Cups</li> <li>Transitions2earth Bowls</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vegware Salad Boxes</li> <li>Vegware Sandwich Boxes</li> <li>WestRock Bio-Plus Earth by Fold Pak Take Out Boxes</li> </ul>
Bioplastic (PLA) – Foamed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anhui Hengxin Foam PLA Plates</li> <li>Earth Maize Foam PLA Plates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Earth Maize Foam PLA Bowls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Earth Maize Foam PLA Clamshells</li> </ul>	
Bioplastic – PLA or similar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anhui Hengxin Clear PLA Plates</li> <li>Eco-Products PLA Plates</li> <li>GrowPlastics Plates (custom)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aseen Corp. Stalk Market Jaya Line Clear PLA Salad Bowls</li> <li>Eco-Products Clear Salad Bowls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pactiv EarthChoice Clear Clamshells</li> <li>World Centric Clear Ingeo Clamshells</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eco-Products PLA Sandwich Wedge Container</li> <li>World Centric PLA Sushi Tray</li> </ul>
Molded Fiber with Bioplastic Lining		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World Centric Leaf Line Bowls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World Centric Leaf Line Clamshells</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World Centric Leaf Line Fiber Box</li> </ul>
Molded Fiber with Unknown Additive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eco-Products Vanguard Line Plates</li> <li>Footprint Café Market Plates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eco-Products Vanguard Line Bowls</li> <li>Footprint Café Market Bowls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eco-Products Vanguard Line Clamshells</li> </ul>	



### Food Wraps, Bakery & Fast Food Bags

#### Deli Paper Sheets and Bags with Wax Coating – Bio- or Petroleum-Based

- Eco-Products Eco-Craft Interfolded Deli Paper
- Green Wacks Deli Paper
- If You Care Paper Snack & Sandwich Bags
- Seaman Paper EcoLite Wraps & Liners
- Vegware Bags & Sleeves (some are PFAS-free)
- Vegware Waxed Deli Sheets



*Toxic-Free Future and Mind The Store campaign do not endorse the products or manufacturers listed.*



# Alternatives to paper food packaging with PFAS



File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help Last edit was made on December 17, 2020 by Nancy Uding



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View only

B5 fx Bowls, Clear Salad

	A	B	C	D
1	PRODUCT	TYPE	MATERIAL	BPI CERTIFIED COMPOSTABLE
2	<a href="#">Aesean Corp. Stalk Market Food Containers</a>	Bowls, Soup Cup	Paper - PLA lining	Yes
3	<a href="#">AJM Packaging Corp. Nature's Own Green Label paper plates</a>	Plates	Paper - uncoated	No
4	<a href="#">AmerCareRoyal PrimeWare Food Containers</a>	Bowls, Soup Cup	Paper - PLA lining	Yes
5	<a href="#">Anhui Hengxin Clear Salad Bowl</a>	Bowls, Clear Salad	PLA - clear	Yes
6	<a href="#">Anhui Hengxin Trays (single compartment)</a>	School Lunch Trays	PLA - foamed	Yes
7	<a href="#">Anhui Hengxin Foam PLA Plates</a>	Plates	PLA - foamed	Yes
8	<a href="#">Anhui Hengxin Foam PLA Tray (hinged)</a>	Clamshells/Hinged Containers	PLA - foamed	Yes
9	<a href="#">Asean Corp. Stalk Market Jaya Line</a>	Bowls, Clear Salad	PLA - clear	Yes
10	<a href="#">Asean Corp. Stalk Market Jaya Line Hinged Deli Box</a>	Clamshells/Hinged Containers	PLA - clear	Yes
11	<a href="#">Bamboo Studio Palm Leaf Plates</a>	Plates	Palm leaf	No
12	<a href="#">Bambu Veneerware Compostable Plates</a>	Plates	Bamboo	No
13	<a href="#">Besics Compostables Bowl</a>	Bowls	PLA	Yes
14	<a href="#">Besics Compostables Soup Cup</a>	Bowls, Soup Cup	Paper - PLA or similar bioplastic lining	Yes
15	<a href="#">Better Earth Hot and Cold Food Containers</a>	Bowls, Soup Cup	Paper - PLA or similar bioplastic lining	Yes
16	<a href="#">Bio-Sposables Soup Bowl</a>	Bowls, Soup Cup	Paper - PLA or similar bioplastic lining	Yes
17	<a href="#">Biodegradable Food Service Earth Bowl</a>	Bowls, Soup Cup	Paper - PLA lining	Yes
18	<a href="#">Biodegradable Food Service Earth Plate</a>	Plates	PLA - foamed	Yes

# sweetgreen®

- **Started offering PFAS-free bowls in San Francisco bay area to comply with SF law**
- **Phasing out PFAS in compostable bowls by the end of 2020 in all stores**

FASTCOMPANY

03-06-20 | WORLD CHANGING IDEAS

## Sweetgreen is rolling out compostable bowls without any 'forever chemicals'

Compostable packaging took a hit when it was discovered that they contained chemicals that would last forever in the soil. Now there's a better, cleaner solution.





- Phasing PFAS out of molded fiber bowls by the end of 2020
- Eliminating PFAS from kids' trays by end of 2021



- Phasing PFAS out by mid 2021



- Phasing PFAS out by mid 2021

Two all-beef patties, special sauce,  
lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions...  
and toxic chemicals?



TOXIC-FREE  
TURE

TELL MCDONALD'S: Get PFAS chemicals  
out of your packaging!



change.org

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Welcome back to Change.org! A new petition wins every hour thanks to signers like you.

What's new

Petition details

Comments

Updates

Discover

## McDonald's: Stop using packaging that contaminates drinking water!



69,596 have signed. Let's get to  
75,000!



Liyah Hilton signed 3 hours ago

Tanya Salter signed 8 hours ago

Thanks to your support this petition  
has a chance at winning! We only  
need 5,404 more signatures to  
reach the next goal - can you help?

Take the next step!



Brenda Hampton and Mind the Store started this petition to McDonald's

# We did it!

## McDonald's bans PFAS chemicals from its packaging!



# Other recent retailer policy commitments

 • New food packaging RSL restricts **PFAS in private brand food packaging**



- **Begun to replace PFAS** in some food packaging with alternatives



- Has a packaging RSL that **restricts PFAS, bisphenols, and phthalates**
- **Eliminated PFAS in almost all** to-go food packaging

# Other recent retailer policy commitments *(continued)*



- Banning PFAS in corporate office cafeterias



- Rite Aid expanded chemicals policy to food packaging – **launched a RSL restricting PFAS**
- First pharmacy chain to make such a commitment

# Retail commitments, by the numbers

- **27 retailers** adopted policies on PFAS

- **71,000 stores**

- **\$307 billion** in sales

# What about Burger King and other retailers?



# ***INTRODUCING: POLLUTED POLLY!***



***Polly's had enough!***



# Cities and states enact bans on PFAS in food packaging



SCIENCE • ADVOCACY • RESULTS Toxic-Free Future [We Are](#) | [Key Issues](#) | [Research](#) | [Healthy](#)

## Washington Approves First-in-Nation Ban on Nonstick “PFAS” Chemicals in Food Packaging

Bill Goes to Governor Inslee for Signature

NEWS BUSINESS OPINION SPORTS A&E FOOD DO THIS OBITS

HEALTH Posted June 4, 2019 | Updated December 27, 2019

### Bill to ban ‘forever chemicals’ in food packaging headed to Mills’ desk

The bill would allow the Maine Department of Environmental Protection to prohibit use of PFAS and phthalates in food packaging as early as January 2022.

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NEWS

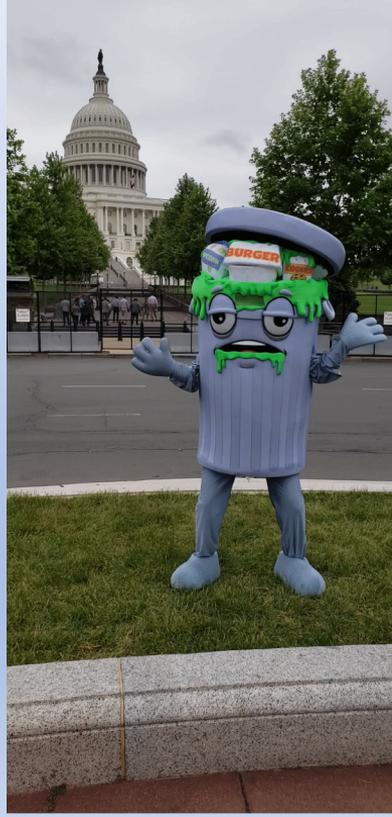
## State of New York to ban PFAS in food packaging

House and Senate chambers both pass legislation, set to ban use of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in food packaging starting in 2023; legislation sent to state governor for signature into law

July 27, 2020 Justin Boucher



# ***Polluted Polly goes to Washington***



# Federal legislation on the horizon



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To A Meeting

News  
And Updates

On The  
Issues

Meet  
Debbie



## Press Releases

### Dingell Bill to Ban PFAS in Food Containers & Cookware Receives Key Hearing

Washington, January 29, 2020



Tags: [Great Lakes and the Environment](#), [Environment & Climate Change](#)

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Today, the Energy and Commerce Committee’s health subcommittee held a hearing on Congresswoman Debbie Dingell’s (D-MI) legislation to ban the use of toxic perfluorinated compounds (PFAS) in food containers and cookware.

“PFAS are toxic, forever chemicals that are everywhere – including food containers and non-stick cookware and countless other everyday products,” **said Dingell**. “Just this week, the city of Ann Arbor found high levels of PFAS in and around the compost facility likely due in part to the presence of food containers containing PFAS. This issue is here, it is threatening public health and our environment now, and we need to act. My important legislation ensures unsafe, hazardous chemicals are not allowed near the food we eat.”

Video of Congresswoman Dingell at Wednesday’s hearing is available [here](#).

Recent attention has focused on PFAS in ground water and the environment. These harmful substances are frequently used to greaseproof, waterproof, and give nonstick properties to food containers, cookware, and consumer products. The [Environmental Working Group found that as many as 40 percent of fast food wrappers](#) and paper products tested positive for fluorine chemicals. Peer-reviewed studies found that PFAS chemicals in food containers can contaminate food. PFAS chemicals have been linked to liver disease, thyroid dysfunction, and several forms of cancer.

Dingell’s [Keep Food Containers Safe from PFAS Act](#) empowers the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to deem PFAS substances in any food containers or cookware as unsafe. The bill gives the FDA until 2022 to enforce this ban. The text of the bill is available [here](#).

Dingell leads efforts in Congress to combat and address PFAS contamination. In early January, the House of Representatives [passed bipartisan legislation led by Dingell](#) that comprehensively

# Thank you!



Liz Hitchcock

Safer Chemicals Healthy Families

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[MindTheStore.org](http://MindTheStore.org)

[RetailerReportCard.com](http://RetailerReportCard.com)



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