

Water

WRAFT among signers of letter criticizing EPA policy

By Hope E. Tremblay

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MASSACHUSETTS – Westfield Residents Advocating for Themselves co-founder Kristen Mello was among the signers on a statement criticizing the Environmental Protection Agency’s proposed cleanup goals in communities across the country with PFAS in their drinking and ground water.

More than 40 groups from 14 states signed the unified statement that asserted the EPA’s goals are not protective of public health, especially for infants and young children. Mello said the EPA needs to know they’re not doing enough.

“These proposed recommendations do not take into account any previous PFAS exposure,” she said. “Obviously this is not health protective for those living in PFAS contaminated communities with higher than average body burdens.”

The letter states that “The Agency’s proposal is not protective of human health particularly infants, children and expectant mothers as it fails to incorporate critical risk factors including placental and breast milk transfer to baby nor the potential for transgenerational body burden as evidenced by the ever-growing, undeniable body of scientific research and health studies.”



Kristen Mello (WNG File Photo)

Per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large group of man-made toxic chemicals used to make consumer products resistant to water, grease or stains. According to the letter, research has shown probable links between PFAS exposure and cancer, thyroid disease, high cholesterol, ulcerative colitis, and pregnancy-induced hypertension.

The EPA’s proposed Preliminary Remediation Goals will inform site-specific cleanup levels for two PFAS chemicals (PFOA and PFOS) in groundwater that is a current or potential source of drinking water.

“As communities impacted by PFAS contamination, we object to the EPA’s preliminary remedial goals for groundwater as a source of current or potential drinking water, and recommendations extrapolated from the discredited lifetime health advisory level of 70 ppt – all which assume no prior exposure,” states the letter.

According to the EPA’s website, today marks the final opportunity for public comment on proposed interim recommendations for addressing PFAS contamination under a wide range of federal cleanup programs, including the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA or Superfund) and corrective action under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

“EPA’s institutional failure to protect public health is reflected in the much lower PFAS standards and advisories set by a growing number of states that recognize the much larger intake rates for infants and the observed biological activity of these chemicals even at very low exposure levels,” the groups emphasized. “Moreover, these failures have the unavoidable effect of targeting less resilient communities and those most vulnerable to harm.”

The groups are from impacted communities in 14 states including Alaska, California, Delaware, Arizona, Florida, New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Carolina, New Mexico, Michigan, Tennessee, Wisconsin and West Virginia.

In addition to Mello, fellow Massachusetts resident Sue Phelan, director of GreenCape out of West Barnstable, also signed the statement. Mello hopes the group voice will be heard.

“By unifying our voices, we hope to send a clear, concise message that this is unacceptable. We deserve PFAS regulatory standards that protect everyone, especially overexposed and vulnerable populations,” said Mello.

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