United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 24, 2016

Dr. Thomas Frieden
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30333

Francis S. Collins, MD. PhD
Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Building One, Room 126
Bethesda MD 20892

Dear Dr. Frieden and Dr. Collins:

As the preeminent federal agencies dealing with public health challenges, we write today to urge the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to do all they can to help educate and assist the people of the Village of Hoosick Falls and the Towns of Hoosick Falls and Petersburgh, three communities in New York that are suffering from exposure to the highly toxic, potentially carcinogenic chemical perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). As you know, PFOA is a man-made chemical that can lead to change in function of the liver, thyroid, pancreas, and hormone levels. In these communities, private manufacturing facilities, including Saint Gobain Performance Plastics in Village of Hoosick Falls, and Taconic Plastics in Petersburg, used PFOA and -- over time -- the chemical found its way into the ground, into the drinking water systems and, most significantly, into peoples' bodies.

A number of actions were taken in response to the discovery of PFOA in the drinking water including: an order from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to cease drinking from the water system in Hoosick Falls; EPA and New York State both listing the impacted area as a Superfund site on their respective programs; New York State spearheading the installation of a new filtration system; and significant testing to define the extent of the pollution -- amongst many other actions by New York State, EPA and local entities. Also, the EPA lowered the recommended PFOA/PFOS level in drinking water to 0.07 parts per billion combined. The agency's recommendation is intended to prevent kidney cancer, immune system damage, and other health problems linked to the compounds.

Further, in response to local concerns regarding levels of exposure, New York State Department of Health has facilitated blood tests for many local residents – and the results were alarming. In the last two weeks, hundreds of residents in the Village of Hoosick Falls have received test results showing severely elevated levels of PFOA in their blood samples. As you know, 2.08 parts per billion of PFOA in blood is considered the safe limit, but in these communities many people, including children, have levels as much as 200 times that safe limit. As you can imagine, there is profound concern in these communities regarding the potential health effects caused by exposure to this chemical, as well as considerable need to provide thorough information about what steps individuals should take if they are exposed to high levels of PFOA. These victims are justifiably concerned, but not enough information has been disseminated to put this severe level

of PFOA into context. We have been inundated with questions from our constituents including: What does such an elevated level of PFOA mean? What does it mean for children? Does it affect pregnancy? What should victims do moving forward? What are the specific illnesses that could result from such an elevated level of PFOA in blood? If so, are there any early warning signs that they should be on the lookout for? These are just a few of the many questions that the residents of these communities are asking.

We urge you to provide any and all resources and personnel to the State of New York and to local officials as they work to fully respond to the myriad of challenges created by this public health dilemma. In light of this pressing need for clear and scientific information, it is important that the CDC and the NIH, our preeminent federal agencies with the resources and expertise to help in situations like this, do all they can – including public meetings in the community, providing public health experts and scientists to assist the state, and creating relevant online information sources –to inform citizens in PFOA-impacted communities like the Village of Hoosick Falls and the Towns of Hoosick Falls and Petersburgh with the best, most up-to-date information on what this means to them and their families, as well as guidance on best practices to protect their health.

It is with great concern for the health of New Yorkers and all Americans that we implore you to prioritize PFOA contamination prevention and response activities. We look forward to your response. Should you have additional questions, please feel free to reach out to the following staff from our offices: Veronica Duron (Veronica_Duron@schumer.senate.gov) or Morgan Brand (Morgan_Brand@schumer.senate.gov) in Senator Schumer's office; and Alyson Northrup (Alyson_Northrup@gillibrand.senate.gov) and Jordan Baugh (Jordan_Baugh@gillibrand.senate.gov) in Senator Gillibrand's office.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Chris Gibson
Member of Congress