JOEL NEY (on behalf of himself and his father, ALEXANDER NEY, an evicted New York City resident currently residing in Hoosick Falls).

Tuesday, August 30, 2016

SENATE HEARING ON PFOA CONTAMINATION IN HOOSICK FALLS

JOEL NEY:

First of all, please know I am grateful to all of you for holding this Senate Hearing and everyone present here today. I, in all sincerity, thank you for your spending your time here and for your attention to something that is deeply important to me as it continues to affect, besides myself, one of my aging parents in particular who resides here.

I do hope that my testimony here today will be heard and it will resonate. The subject matter of the Senate Hearing is of great concern to me. I deeply love my parents. It hurts me to see both my parents briskly aging, as I am their last child and was born in their later years. I am their only son and last remaining child without a family of my own.

My mother, sister and her many children – two of whom are severely Autistic and have been coming to Hoosick Falls frequently for years – should be mentioned, but they don't reside here. I can't even begin to speculate whether the children have been affected by the PFOA contaminated water. It hurts too much and I am not prepared to discuss it.

I will talk only about myself and my father, Alexander Ney, a well-known New York City immigrant artist whom so far I have dedicated my entire life to. As he gets older, I only feel an increasing moral obligation to assist him as best as I can and protect his best interests.

I really expected my father to come here today to share himself, but he is an older man who survived World War II as a child and fled the Soviet Union in the 1970's after several traumatic incidents there as he was by all accounts deemed a dangerously influential "nonconformist" in contradiction with Communist rule. Also, despite being a US citizen for over 40 years, he still speaks English poorly and with a heavy accent.

Despite my best effort earlier this afternoon persuading him to come with me, but for variety of reasons including his own personality traits and fears I assume arising from his experiences with Soviet authority, he did not. But the reality is the subject of this Hearing did and does affect both him and me a great deal.

For the past year, I have spent most of my time living with and assisting him here in Hoosick Falls, where he resides since being evicted from New York City in one of the Village's most visible buildings, the one with the giant Grandma Moses mural on its side on Route 22.

It used to be if you searched for Hoosick Falls in The New York Times website, my parent's dramatic eviction from NYC to the temporary residence here would be the story to come up (besides a news story from 1860 of a fire at the Walter A. Wood Factory). Now it appears there are seven, and counting, that mention Hoosick Falls, specifically in regards to its PFOA water crisis.

I really truly hope not, and am currently unaware whether PFOA is in my system and whether it has affected my own physical health. I have been very nauseous in recent months, with even recurring fits of violent vomiting, that my father has unfortunately witnessed as it horrified him. I'd rather think that is just my nerves reacting to all the challenges I am facing. In reality, on a subconscious level, I am probably stalling seeking treatment because after all I've heard I'm afraid to hear something terrible when I do finally go see my primary care physician in New York. I've lived long enough to know, I

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cannot be unavailable to my father as I am the only person I know who understands and truly cares for him, or, worse case scenario, let my parents at their age endure the losing their child.

I have to be frank about this on a personal level: the PFOA matter, has, and continues to, tremendously aggravate my emotional well-being, my so-called 'mental health.' There's a stigma in this country to talk about or reveal one's 'mental health condition,' but I'm sure I am not the only person with various mental health conditions that are of course are directly affected by this crisis, the response to the crisis, here in Hoosick Falls or any of the regions that have been declared to have PFOA-contamination.

Because I haven't had the opportunity to determine whether or not PFOA is in my system and whether it has or will affect me physically, but believe me I really hope it has not. Public knowledge of the entire ongoing PFOA matter - I mean everything, not just the confirmed fact contaminated water existed, or may still exist, in Hoosick Falls, but how the authorities have allegedly been responding it according to wide media coverage of the ordeal, of course take their toll.

I am conflicted because I am not interested in pointing fingers but I really must note: neither my father nor I never were told in any manner when PFOA blood level testing was being held here in the Village. Of course I would have participated immediately.

This might have to do that the building has no working mailbox, but we do have a large P.O. Box at the Hoosick Falls Post Office at 35 Main Street, but no notices nor updates were ever mailed to or left about this important public service. Only last week we finally received a photocopy of a notice regarding some water facility that had reportedly broken down and now has finished being repaired, but only after the fact something had happened there at all.

No notices were placed on or under the door or conveyed in any manner at all, despite this being one of the most visible buildings in the city and local neighbors and residents all know my father currently resides here.

I would most definitely, given the opportunity, take whatever medical tests necessary to determine my personal PFOA levels, and I think it's even more important for someone my father's age. He will be 77 next month. It's extremely alarming to read reports now that PFOA levels for persons in Hoosick Falls are many times over the average person in the United States.

And regardless of avalanche media coverage of it ranging from news outlets of , the fact there has been a PFOA contamination has already been publicly recorded and released in both State and Federal reports & now unfortunately any contemporary reference to Hoosick Falls appears to be - for the moment and I'm afraid the foreseeable future - completely married to the horror of factory-poisoned public water.

One person in the city I was randomly speaking to referred to Hoosick Falls, and I quote, as "the origin of all poisoned water that's engulfed other regions in upstate New York." Whether that's an exaggeration or not, it is a reflection of how apparently some or even most of the public - think of Hoosick Falls. Someone else also recently asked me, in sincerity, whether I have checked whether I or my father have early stages of cancer.

As you can imagine, even though I'm understanding enough to departmentalize these comments – actually coming from people with good intentions towards me - frighten me a great deal.

I obviously greatly fear whatever its long-term effects might have on my physical health or my father's physical health especially at his age. One thing is for certain: the PFOA's entire ordeal has a notoriety that continues to accompany it, that is already hurting my father's ability to recover from a very painful and dramatic eviction from New York City just last year.

Again, thank you for your time and attention, and for giving me this rare opportunity to speak. Thank you.