Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

May 14, 2018

The Honorable Scott Pruitt
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of the Administrator
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Administrator Pruitt and Secretary Azar,

We write to you today regarding a report citing that Trump administration officials blocked the release of a study that reportedly showed that per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) can have negative health effects at levels far lower than the EPA has previously acknowledged.[1] We are gravely concerned that the findings have been kept from the public and urge you to release it immediately.

This study, conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services, has been described as a toxicological profile that lists the dangers of the PFAS chemicals, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), and is based on a review of previously conducted scientific studies. Previous health advisories from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) indicate that "exposure to PFOA and PFOS over certain levels may result in adverse health effects, including developmental effects to fetuses during pregnancy or to breastfed infants, cancer, liver effects (e.g., tissue damage), immune effects (e.g., antibody production and immunity), thyroid effects and other effects."[2] However, this latest study reportedly indicates that PFOA and PFOS can have negative effects at levels far below the EPA's current health advisory level for exposure of 70 parts-per-trillion (ppt). The public should have access to the latest information about the risks these chemicals pose, which is why it is critical that this study is released without delay.

It is unacceptable and irresponsible that release of this study has been blocked for five months out of fear that it would create a "potential public relations nightmare."[3] Families who have been exposed to emerging contaminants deserve to know about any potential health impacts that the contaminants may involve, and it is completely unacceptable that your agencies are withholding science-based information and failing to provide details to these families.

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[1] POLITICO Pro Energy, "Emails: White House intervened in chemicals study to head off 'public relation nightmare'. Annie Snider, 5/14/2018
[2] https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/drinking-water-health-advisories-pfoa-and-pfos
[3] See 1.

We are deeply troubled by the decision to withhold such an important study regarding a contaminant that has impacted Granite Staters and other states throughout the country. We urge you to immediately release this study for public review without further delay.

Sincerely,

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

CC: Patrick Breysse, PhD, CIH, Director, NCEH & ATSDR