

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

January 18, 2018

The Honorable Patrick Breysse
Director
Agency for Toxic Substances
and Disease Registry
1600 Clifton Road SE
Atlanta, GA 30333

The Honorable Patrick M. Shanahan
Deputy Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1010 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Director Breysse and Deputy Secretary Shanahan:

Thank you for your commitment to addressing the growing public health concerns related to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination at military installations in New Hampshire and across the country. As your agencies begin implementation of section 316 of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2018, we request that the Pease International Tradeport in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, be included in the study on the health effects, and cumulative impact of those exposed to PFAS chemicals. Because of its operation as an Air Force Base from 1956 to 1991, the Tradeport has experienced considerable ground and drinking water contamination from PFAS, which has heavily impacted families living in Portsmouth and surrounding communities.

As you are aware, PFAS materials are a byproduct of aqueous film forming foam (AFFF), a fire suppressant agent used at military installations, and have been associated with a variety of adverse human health effects, including birth defects, various forms of cancer and immune system dysfunction. On May 19, 2016, the EPA established new lifetime health advisory levels for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) or perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), two PFAS chemicals contained in formulations of AFFF. While knowledge about the health impacts of PFAS is evolving, the EPA has labeled these materials as “contaminants of emerging concern” because the agency’s lengthy process for assessing toxicity has not yet concluded. This has caused many sleepless nights for families across the country living and working near military sites that have been contaminated with these materials, including those in New Hampshire.

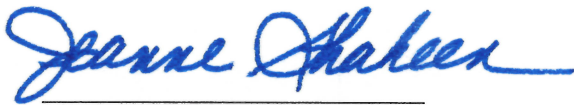
In 2014, the city of Portsmouth closed a major water supply well located at Pease after the Air Force found PFAS in the drinking water at levels 12.5 times higher than what was then the provisional health advisory from the EPA. Moreover, state health officials have determined that more than 1,500 people, including children who attended two day care centers near the site, have elevated levels of PFAS in their blood from drinking contaminated groundwater near the former air base.

In response to the contamination at Pease, New Hampshire town officials have been actively working with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, the U.S. Air Force Civil Engineering Center, the EPA and the state's Department of Environmental Services to develop a comprehensive water quality monitoring and sampling program as well as establish plans to remediate PFAS-contaminated areas. For example, through collaborative efforts, these government agencies have installed a system that filters and removes PFAS substances from the remaining wells at Pease, and the Air Force is moving forward with plans to construct groundwater treatment systems to protect wells near the former air base from further contamination. Seacoast community leaders have also created citizen-led panels to educate members of the public about the potential health effects of PFAS and drive local, state and federal government response to address this contamination.

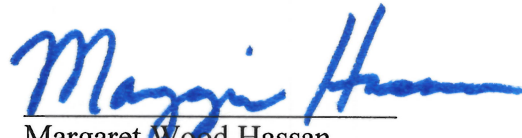
Together, these municipal- and community-led groups have gathered information critical to assessing the extent of the contamination, created a platform for public involvement and participation and formed close partnerships with state and federal agencies tasked with responding to the environmental and health consequences of PFAS contamination. Given the framework established by these impacted communities, we believe that the Pease International Tradeport would serve as an excellent installation to include in the health study and urge your agencies implement this study without delay.

There is a critical need to understand and address any potential adverse health effects PFAS water contamination may have on our communities. As Congress moves forward with legislation to fund investigation and remediation activities for PFAS-contaminated military sites, we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Pease International Tradeport is included in any further actions to implement the nationwide health study and exposure assessment.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress