

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 21, 2021

The Honorable Shawn G. Skelly
Assistant Secretary of Defense, Readiness
Department of Defense
4000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-4000

Dear Secretary Skelly:

We write with concern over findings contained in the July 22, 2021 Department of Defense (DoD) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) report titled “Evaluation of the Department of Defense’s Actions to Control Containment Effects from Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances at Department of Defense Installations”¹. The investigation revealed a lack of proactive measures taken to limit exposure to substances that may expose people and the environment to perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS), as well as an underutilization of the data collected through the PFAS blood testing program for DoD firefighters.

As you know, PFAS contamination has been found or is suspected at nearly 700 current and former DoD installations across the country. The use of PFAS-laden firefighting foam (AFFF) has contaminated water supplies, causing untold harm to service members, military families and defense communities. As first responders, DoD firefighters have unique and recurring exposure to AFFF for training and emergency response that have placed them at greater risk of health complications such as cancer, diabetes and high cholesterol. Additionally, there are concerns that firefighters can also be exposed to PFAS over time through their protective clothing, known as turnout gear. However, the full extent of PFAS exposure for DoD firefighters was unknown due to inadequate data collection processes. The *Protecting Military Firefighters from PFAS Act*, which was subsequently signed into law as part of the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 116-442), required DoD to provide firefighters with PFAS blood testing to determine the severity of their exposures and for inclusion in their health records.

While the DoD OIG report found that the Department was complying with the requirement to provide PFAS blood testing to firefighters, it also found that there was no plan to “track, trend, and analyze the results...at a DoD-wide level, as required by DoDI 6055.05.” We were pleased that at the time of the report’s publication, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness Thomas Constable concurred with the OIG’s recommendation to develop a plan to address the analytic deficiencies and cited ongoing health studies, like the landmark PFAS study at Pease, as important resources to inform the Department’s plan. However, we believe the Department may be able to take interim steps to enhance tracking and trend analysis to better understand the rate and severity of exposure ahead of the results of in-process health studies and guidance on

¹ Office of the Inspector General. (2021). *Evaluation of the Department of Defense’s Actions to Control Containment Effects from Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances at Department of Defense Installations*. U.S. Department of Defense. <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jul/23/2002809965/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2021-105.PDF>.

lifetime limits is published. Therefore, we respectfully request a briefing on the status on the Department's development of a plan to track, trend and analyze DOD firefighter PFAS blood testing results and opportunities to improve exposure visibility based on the blood testing data currently being collected.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your service to our service members, military families and defense communities impacted by PFAS contamination.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



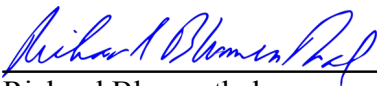
Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



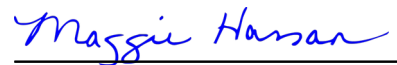
Jack Reed
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



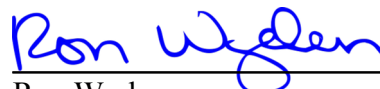
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



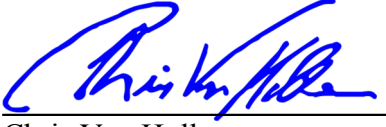
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



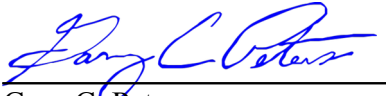
Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator

Cc: Dr. Terry Adirim, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense, Health Affairs
Lt. Gen. (Dr.) Ronald J. Place, Director, Defense Health Agency