

Opening Statement – As Prepared
Ranking Member Rob Portman
U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
& GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
“FEDERAL GOVERNMENT’S ROLE IN ADDRESSING PFAS”
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Thank you Chairman Peters for holding this hearing on the federal government’s efforts to address PFAS contamination. And thank you witnesses for providing your testimony today.

There are more than 4,700 identified PFAS chemicals. PFAS chemicals have been around since the 1940s and are found in everything from fire-fighting foams to food wrappers to cleaning products, and even clothing. They have been used in manufacturing for decades to make products that are resistant to heat, oil, stains, grease and water.

But with increasing awareness of potential PFAS exposures – particularly from drinking water systems – I share the concerns of my constituents in Ohio and communities across the country about the impact PFAS contamination could have on their health and the health of their families.

In 2016, the EPA established lifetime drinking water health advisory levels for two of the most prevalent and widely-researched PFAS chemicals – PFOA and PFOS – based on scientific studies that indicated exposure could result in adverse health effects. Although these chemicals were voluntarily phased-out of production in the US, their persistence in the environment remains a cause for concern.

According to the CDC, NIH, and EPA, research is still ongoing regarding the impacts exposure to PFAS chemicals can have on human health. This research will help ensure that we have a coordinated, effective federal effort to address and minimize PFAS contamination – so we know the scope of the problem and we can provide our communities accurate information if risks are present. As we consider new options for addressing PFAS through policy and regulation, it is imperative that our approach is informed by science and evidence.

It is equally important that the federal government maintain strong partnerships with our state and local actors who are the first level of defense against all health hazards in our communities. That’s why I am pleased that we will hear from Mark Johnson, the Deputy Director of Business and Regulatory Affairs at the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, who will be able to give us that perspective and highlight opportunities to strengthen this partnership during our second panel.

To that end, I'm pleased the bipartisan infrastructure law provides a historic commitment to strengthen and upgrade our nation's water infrastructure, including \$10 billion to help states address PFAS in drinking water.

I look forward to hear all our witnesses' testimonies today as we discuss the federal government's role in addressing PFAS.