



March 18, 2024

The Honorable Tom Carper
 Chairman
 U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public
 Works
 410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
 Ranking Member
 U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public
 Works
 410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Carper and Ranking Member Capito:

The undersigned organizations represent local governments and private entities responsible for safeguarding public health and the environment, including drinking water, wastewater treatment, stormwater management, and water recycling facilities, municipal solid waste landfills, and composting facilities. We write to urge that any legislation on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW) considers include a specific provision to ensure that the organizations we represent are explicitly recognized as “passive receivers” of PFAS and afford these essential public services a narrow exemption from liability under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). Absent such relief, designation of certain PFAS as CERCLA hazardous substances would shift the “polluter pays” principle of the law to that of a “community pays” model placing the burden of compliance and cleanup onto ratepayers and the public at-large.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has stated often, including during testimony to EPW, that the agency would use its “discretionary authority” in pursuing CERCLA enforcement actions against certain parties. However, this commitment offers little comfort to our sectors given the expansive rights of Potentially Responsible Parties under CERCLA to bring contribution litigation against other entities that are alleged to be additional sources of hazardous substances at a cleanup site.

EPA has stated that it has insufficient existing legal authority to provide relief to public service providers from the impact of CERCLA contribution litigation. Claims for contribution against passive receiver groups thus would generate significant litigation costs for lawful operations going back decades—costs that would lead to significant cost increases on essential public service providers and the communities and residents they serve.

It is important to highlight that our members deliver essential public services that do not involve the manufacture or use of PFAS. We are passive receivers of media containing PFAS that are ubiquitous in the water supply, wastewater treatment process, stormwater, biosolids management, and solid waste streams. Each of our sectors is interdependent: landfills rely on wastewater treatment facilities for their leachate discharge while water and wastewater treatment facilities depend on landfills and compost facilities for biosolids management, recycling of organics, and disposal of spent water filtration systems. Although our members carry-out the delivery of public health services consistent with the requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act, Clean Water Act, and Solid Waste Disposal Act, among other federal and state mandates, CERCLA designation, absent Congressional action, would disrupt the interdependence of passive receivers by driving each sector to revisit the acceptance of influent streams that might contain PFAS concentrations and impacting our ability to recover resources that can contribute to significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Our sectors acknowledge our role as part of the long-term solution to PFAS management, recognize the need to protect public health and the environment, and share the goal of holding accountable those entities that are primarily responsible for PFAS contamination. Nevertheless, any action designating certain PFAS compounds as hazardous substances must be accompanied by relief that allows communities to continue to rely on the affordability of the essential public services our sectors provide. Accordingly, we urge the Committee to provide statutory relief from CERCLA liability for owners and operators of passive receiver facilities.

Sincerely,

American Public Works Association
Association of Compost Producers – California
Association of Washington Cities
California Association of Sanitation Agencies
California Waste Haulers Council
Clean Water Professionals of Kentucky & Tennessee
Coalition for Clean Water – Washington
Coalition of Recyclers of Residual Organics by
Practitioners of Sustainability
Connecticut Water Environment Association
Green Mountain Water Environment Association
Illinois Association of Wastewater Agencies
Indiana Water Environment Association
Kansas Water Environment Association
League of Oregon Cities
Maine Water Environment Association
Massachusetts Water Environment Association
Michigan Waste & Recycling Association
Michigan Water Environment Association
Mid-Atlantic Biosolids Association
Midwest Biosolids Association
Municipal Environmental Group – Wastewater Division
Municipal Waste Management Association
National Association of Counties
National Association of Water Companies
National League of Cities
National Municipal Stormwater Alliance

National Waste & Recycling Association
National Water Resources Association
New England Water Environment Association
New Hampshire Water Pollution Control Association
New Jersey Water Environment Association
New York Water Environment Association
North East Biosolids & Residuals Association
Northwest Biosolids Association
Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies
Oregon Refuse & Recycling Association
Resource Recovery Coalition of California
Rhode Island Water Environment Association
Solid Waste Association of North America
Southeast Biosolids Association
Special Districts Association of Oregon
The United States Conference of Mayors
U.S. Composting Council
Virginia Biosolids Council
Washington Association of Sewer & Water Districts
Washington Refuse & Recycling Association
WateReuse Association
Water & Wastewater Equipment Manufacturers
Association
Water Quality Association
West Coast Refuse & Recycling Coalition
Wisconsin Counties Solid Waste Management
Association

CC: Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works