



July 20, 2026

Lee Zeldin & Jessica Kramer
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Washington, DC 20460

RE: Docket No. EPA–HQ– OW–2025–0654, *Rescission of Regulatory Determinations and Removal of Related Provisions for Four PFAS Substances (PFHxS, PFNA, HFPO–DA (GenX), and the Mixture of These Three PFAS Plus PFBS)*, 91 Fed. Reg. 29414 (May 20, 2026).

Dear Administrator Zeldin and Assistant Administrator for Water Kramer:

The Governors Public Health Alliance (PHA)—an alliance of Governors spanning every region in the country and representing nearly one in three people in the United States—hereby submits comments on the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) proposal to withdraw its 2024 regulations limiting the maximum allowable levels of four PFAS, or “forever chemicals,” in drinking water¹—substances the EPA has acknowledged may cause harm to health.² We urge the EPA to withdraw this proposed rescission, which risks endangering public health and reversing important federal advancements to protect our drinking water and communities in every state.

PHA is committed to protecting and advancing the health and wellbeing of hundreds of millions of Americans across our states.³ As Governors responsible for protecting public health, we reaffirm the importance of maintaining uniform federal drinking water standards to ensure that every American has access to clean and safe drinking water, regardless of the state in which they reside. We oppose the proposed rescission, which will (1) cause significant, scientifically proven harm to the health of Americans in every state, (2) shift the federal regulatory burden of establishing a drinking water standard onto states, and (3) risk violating the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA).

¹ Formally, EPA has proposed to “rescind the regulatory determinations” for these substances—that is, to reverse its prior finding that they warrant national drinking water regulation—and to remove the corresponding limits and provisions from the 2024 rule (known as a National Primary Drinking Water Regulation, or NPDWR).

² U.S. Env’tl. Prot. Agency, *Our Current Understanding of the Human Health and Environmental Risks of PFAS*, <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/our-current-understanding-human-health-and-environmental-risks-pfas> (last updated Apr. 21, 2026).

³ PHA membership includes California Governor Gavin Newsom, Colorado Governor Jared Polis, Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont, Delaware Governor Matt Meyer, Guam Governor Lou Leon Guerrero, Hawai‘i Governor Josh Green, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker, Maryland Governor Wes Moore, Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey, New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill, New York Governor Kathy Hochul, North Carolina Governor Josh Stein, Oregon Governor Tina Kotek, Rhode Island Governor Daniel McKee, and Washington Governor Bob Ferguson.

A. The proposed rescission would harm the health of Americans, cause significant economic losses, and impose substantial burdens on public health infrastructure.

PFAS pose a wide range of serious health risks to Americans. Unlike other contaminants, when PFAS enter the body, they resist breaking down and instead accumulate in the blood and organs over years of exposure.⁴ Based on peer-reviewed scientific studies, the EPA recognizes that this buildup may lead to increased risk of certain cancers, including prostate, kidney, and testicular cancers; reduced ability of the immune system to fight infections, including reduced vaccine response; interference with the body's natural hormones; reproductive effects, such as decreased fertility and increased high blood pressure in pregnant women; developmental effects or delays in children, including low birth weight, accelerated puberty, and behavior changes; and increased cholesterol levels and risk of obesity.⁵ These risks stem from the fact that PFAS accumulate in the body over time rather than breaking down, disrupting hormone, immune, and metabolic functions. Federal drinking water standards are essential because most Americans cannot meaningfully protect themselves from PFAS. When drinking water systems are contaminated with PFAS, seemingly ordinary actions—like filling up a water bottle or drinking from a water fountain—all incrementally “bioaccumulate,” or increase adverse health risks over time.⁶

Because drinking water is an unavoidable daily necessity, changes in individual behavior will do little to reduce PFAS exposure. The EPA recognizes that current certifications for PFAS filters—perhaps one of the only ways to mitigate exposure at the individual and family level—“do not yet indicate that a filter will remove PFAS down to the levels EPA has now set for a drinking water standard.”⁷ The result is that millions of Americans are exposed to contaminants they cannot see, taste, smell, or reasonably avoid through individual action.

Currently, the EPA estimates that approximately 176 million Americans receive drinking water from public water systems in which PFAS have been detected.⁸ Unchecked, this exposure will also strain the nation's public health infrastructure. As more individuals develop PFAS-related conditions over time, states will face growing demand for healthcare services that falls on

⁴ Yale Sustainability, *Yale Experts Explain PFAS “Forever Chemicals”* (May 20, 2025), <https://sustainability.yale.edu/explainers/yale-experts-explain-pfas-forever-chemicals>.

⁵ U.S. Env't Prot. Agency, *Our Current Understanding of the Human Health and Environmental Risks of PFAS*, <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/our-current-understanding-human-health-and-environmental-risks-pfas> (last updated Apr. 21, 2026).

⁶ Nat'l Inst. of Env't Health Scis., *Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)*, <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/pfc> (last reviewed Mar. 6, 2026).

⁷ U.S. Env'tl. Prot. Agency, *Identifying Drinking Water Filters Certified to Reduce PFAS*, <https://www.epa.gov/water-research/identifying-drinking-water-filters-certified-reduce-pfas>.

⁸ U.S. Env'tl. Prot. Agency, *Occurrence Data from the Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule*, <https://www.epa.gov/dwucmr/occurrence-data-unregulated-contaminant-monitoring-rule> (last updated Feb. 12, 2026).

already resource-constrained Medicaid programs, public hospitals, and community health centers.

Continued PFAS exposure will also cause substantial economic consequences. A widely cited peer-reviewed study estimates that PFAS exposure imposes as much as \$63 billion in annual U.S. costs in medical bills and lost productivity from PFAS-linked conditions..⁹ These costs do not fall on PFAS manufacturers, but on individual Americans, taxpayers, and healthcare providers and insurers.¹⁰ Moreover, removal of PFAS from public drinking water systems is estimated to cost an additional \$37.1 to \$48.3 billion in the next five years, which will be displaced onto public utilities companies, ratepayers, and state and local governments, with disproportionately negative impacts faced by low-income and vulnerable communities.¹¹

The 2024 regulation—the first of its kind regulating PFAS—recognized the serious health risks of forever chemicals in drinking water and the need for a nationwide standard to protect Americans’ health. In the preamble to the 2024 rule, the EPA noted that PFAS “co-occur in drinking water,” carry “additive health concerns when present in mixtures” and pose “a particular threat for overburdened communities that experience disproportionate environmental impacts.” The science undergirding this rule is unchanged. Rescinding this rule will constitute a major step backward for public health, allowing PFAS levels to go unchecked in at least 35 states that solely rely on federally mandated drinking water standards,¹² passing all responsibility down to the states to regulate PFAS independently.

B. The proposed rescission would shift the federal regulatory burden of establishing drinking water standards onto states, with no uniform standards to follow.

Without a federal standard, at best, PFAS regulation will be a state-by-state patchwork that cannot be as protective as a federal standard. While some states have independently tackled the PFAS crisis through state-level legislation and litigation, drinking water crosses state borders, and

⁹ Vladislav Obsekov, Linda G. Kahn & Leonardo Trasande, *Leveraging Systematic Reviews to Explore Disease Burden and Costs of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substance Exposures in the United States*, 15 *Exposure & Health* 373 (2023) (Tracking the top five medical conditions with the strongest links to PFAS exposure—including low birth weight, childhood obesity, kidney cancer, testicular cancer, and hypothyroidism—the study calculates billions of dollars of costs comprised from medical bills and lost worker productivity resulting from these conditions).

¹⁰ Alissa Cordner et al., *The True Cost of PFAS and the Benefits of Acting Now*, 55 *Envtl. Sci. & Tech.* 9630 (2021).

¹¹ Alan Roberson, AWWA Releases Updated National PFAS Cost Estimate, Ass’n of State Drinking Water Adm’rs (Aug. 2, 2024), <https://www.asdwa.org/2024/08/02/awwa-releases-updated-national-pfas-cost-estimate/>.

¹² States that rely wholly on federal drinking water standards for PFAS include Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina (in progress), North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming.



consequently, a lapse in drinking water standards in one state risks contamination of the country's public water system as a whole. Only 15 states currently impose state-level PFAS-related drinking water standards that codify or are stricter than federal standards,¹³ leaving the residents of 35 states to depend on the federally imposed limits. As a result, the proposed rescission would shift the regulatory burden of establishing drinking water standards onto states, many of which will have to scramble to develop and implement their own independent limits, or risk having no PFAS limits at all.

Consistent national standards provide the regulatory certainty that states rely on when allocating resources and making long-term public health investments— including investments made in reliance on the 2024 regulation such as expanded drinking water testing and monitoring, state-established drinking water standards, treatment and infrastructure investments, consumer product restrictions, firefighting foam bans, biosolids management, and waste disposal requirements. Reversing course now would undermine years of state planning, create regulatory uncertainty for public water systems, and jeopardize efforts to limit PFAS exposure. Indeed, in May 2026, the EPA announced approximately \$1 billion in additional funding to assist states in addressing PFAS-contaminated drinking water,¹⁴ underscoring the EPA's recognition that states require significant resources to protect drinking water. Proposing rescission of the regulation after states have already allocated budgets and developed compliance strategies, would create unnecessary disruption in ongoing implementation efforts and shift additional administrative, operational, and financial burdens onto states.

C. The proposed rescission risks violating statutory obligations of the EPA and anti-backsliding provisions of the SDWA.

The EPA has statutory obligations to regulate public water systems for contaminants like PFAS that the proposed rescission would likely violate. Under SDWA §1412(b)(1), the EPA is required to establish federal drinking water standards applicable to public water systems and regulate any contaminants that may have adverse health effects; are known or likely to occur in public water systems at levels of concern; and would present a meaningful opportunity to reduce health risks. Given the scientifically proven adverse effects of PFAS on health,¹⁵ the widespread presence of

¹³ States with some form of state-level PFAS-related drinking water standards include Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin.

¹⁴ U.S. Env't Prot. Agency, *EPA Advances Comprehensive PFAS Strategy with Legally Defensible, Practical, Scientifically Sound Drinking Water Protections* (May 18, 2026), <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-advances-comprehensive-pfas-strategy-legally-defensible-practical-scientifically>.

¹⁵ U.S. Env't Prot. Agency, *Our Current Understanding of the Human Health and Environmental Risks of PFAS*, <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/our-current-understanding-human-health-and-environmental-risks-pfas> (last updated Apr. 21, 2026).



PFAS in almost half of all U.S. public water systems,¹⁶ and the meaningful opportunity to reduce PFAS exposure through setting legally enforceable Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCL), rescission of the regulation likely violates the EPA’s obligations under the SDWA. This is especially concerning because the EPA did not offer any alternative regulation in place of this proposed rescission. As a result, hundreds of millions of Americans could be left without any regulation of four hazardous PFAS in their drinking water—an outcome that the EPA is statutorily required to avoid.

The SDWA also contains an anti-backsliding provision in § 1412(b)(9), which requires that all revisions to water standards by the EPA “maintain” or provide greater protection to health. Given that no enforceable federal drinking water standards existed for the four relevant PFAS prior to the 2024 regulation, the MCLs established an entirely new national baseline of public health protection that the EPA must either maintain or strengthen. Instead, seemingly against its statutory obligations, the EPA has chosen to eliminate this essential baseline.

PHA’s member Governors are committed to protecting public health. The proposed rescission of the 2024 regulations would have harmful consequences on the public health and wellbeing of hundreds of millions of Americans. Rescinding these important rules would needlessly shift the federal regulatory burden of establishing a uniform drinking water standard onto states and risks violating the EPA’s own obligations to maintain or provide greater protections for public health. For these reasons, we urge the EPA to withdraw the proposed rescission of the 2024 regulations.

Sincerely,

Angela Botticella
Managing Director
Governors Public Health Alliance

¹⁶ U.S. Geological Survey, *Tap Water Study Detects PFAS “Forever Chemicals” Across U.S.* (July 5, 2023), <https://www.usgs.gov/news/national-news-release/tap-water-study-detects-pfas-forever-chemicals-across-us>.