

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Griffin Roberge 271-3042

HB 256, adding members from Londonderry to the commission to investigate and analyze the environmental and public health impacts relating to releases of perfluorinated chemicals into the air, soil, and groundwater in Merrimack, Bedford, and Litchfield.

Hearing Date: March 29, 2021.

Time Opened: 1:07 p.m.

Time Closed: 1:16 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Avard, Giuda, Gray, Watters and Perkins Kwoka.

Members of the Committee Absent: None.

Bill Analysis: This bill adds members from Londonderry to the commission to investigate and analyze the environmental and public health impacts relating to releases of perfluorinated chemicals into the air, soil, and groundwater in Merrimack, Bedford, and Litchfield.

Sponsors:

Rep. Rung
Rep. Mooney

Rep. Thomas
Rep. Healey

Rep. Mullen

Who supports the bill: Richard DeMark; Nicole Fordey; Ron Goggans; Lucinda Hope; Carl Lenahan; Representative Maureen Mooney, Hillsborough - District 21; Nancy Murphy; Stephanie Osborne; Representative Andrew Renzullo, Hillsborough - District 37; Representative Suzanne Smith, Grafton - District 8; Representative Deb Stevens, Hillsborough - District 34; Elaine Thomas; Robin Vogt; Michael Wimsatt, NH Department of Environmental Services; Gary Woods.

Who opposes the bill: None.

Who is neutral on the bill: None.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Representative Rosemarie Rung
Hillsborough - District 21

- HB 256 was recommended "ought to pass" by the House Resources, Recreation, and Development Committee by a vote of 21-0 and was placed on the House consent calendar. The committee's recommendation later passed the full House on a voice vote.
- Representative Rung serves as the chair of the Commission on the Environmental and Public Health Impacts of Perfluorinated Chemicals Commission (Commission) created via HB 737 (2019). The Commission investigates and analyzes the environmental and public health impacts related to the release of perfluorinated chemicals in the air, soil, and groundwater in Merrimack, Bedford, and Litchfield. These three communities were affected by the release of perfluorinated chemicals from Saint Gobain in Merrimack. This Commission's membership includes appointees from state agencies, environmentalists, local officials, residents, and state elected officials.

- The Commission issued its first interim report in November 2020 with several legislative recommendations. One of those recommendations was to expand the Commission’s membership to include a representative and resident from the Town of Londonderry. The Commission later found out that Londonderry was also affected by Saint Gobain’s operations. Having Londonderry’s participation in the Commission would be welcomed.

*Representative Suzanne Smith
Grafton – District 8*

- Reiterated Representative Rung’s testimony in support of HB 256.

*Nancy Murphy
Merrimack, NH*

- Introduced HB 737 (2019) when she served as a House representative. Had the impact of perfluorinated chemicals in Londonderry been known during HB 737’s introduction, the community would have been included in the Commission’s makeup. Londonderry should be added to the Commission’s membership.

*Michael Wimsatt – provided written testimony
Director, Waste Management Division, NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES)*

- HB 737 was introduced during the 2019 legislative session. The Commission’s focus was to investigate the impacts of past releases of perfluorinated chemicals in Merrimack, Bedford, and Litchfield. At the time, these three communities were perceived to be those most severely impacted by groundwater contamination with perfluorinated chemicals. While impacts were known to exist in Londonderry, the full extent of those impacts was not yet known. Since HB 737’s passage, considerable additional information relative to significant impacts on private drinking water wells in Londonderry has been collected. NHDES believes it appropriate to add representatives from Londonderry to the Commission and give them full participation.
- Senator Gray asked if there were any other communities that NHDES believed were significantly impacted by perfluorinated chemicals that should also be added to the Commission.
 - Director Wimsatt said that if HB 256 became law, four communities – Merrimack, Bedford, Litchfield, and Londonderry – would have representation on the Commission. The only other communities that were impacted by the release of perfluorinated chemicals from Saint Gobain would be a small portion of the City of Manchester where it borders Litchfield to the south, and parts of northern Hudson. NHDES would not object if those communities wanted to participate in the Commission, but NHDES was not able to recommend that those communities be included.
- Senator Gray noted that there were other communities that were affected by perfluorinated chemicals. He asked if NHDES could elaborate on the issues other communities are facing.
 - Director Wimsatt said the release of perfluorinated chemicals into the air, soil, and groundwater around the state is expansive. The issue affects southern and seacoast communities, and parts of southwest and northern NH. HB 737 was intended to create a Commission to specifically look at the release of perfluorinated chemicals from the Saint Gobain facility and its impact on surrounding communities.

*Representative Maureen Mooney
Merrimack – District 21*

- The Commission thrives on ideas, input, and collaboration from its members. Adding representation from Londonderry would enhance the Commission’s ongoing work.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition: None.

Neutral Information Presented: None.

GJR
Date Hearing Report completed: March 29, 2021.