

# The Intelligencer

---

## Bill would examine PFAS exposures in military children

By Jenny Wagner

Posted Sep 12, 2019 at 6:45 PM

RECEIVED

SEP 13 2019

HORSHAM WATER AND  
SEWER AUTHORITY

A new bill introduced on Thursday by U.S. Reps. Madeleine Dean, Andy Kim and Xochitl Torres Small, would examine exposures to toxic firefighting chemicals in children who currently live on military bases, or have within the last 10 years.

Servicemembers and civilian employees who lived and worked on area military bases have said they've felt overlooked since PFAS were discovered in the drinking water there five years ago.

A new bill introduced on Thursday by U.S. Reps. Madeleine Dean, D-4, of Abington, Andy Kim, D-New Jersey, and Xochitl Torres Small, D-New Mexico, would examine exposures to the toxic firefighting chemicals in their children.

Among other things, the Protect Our Military Children Act, or H.R. 4295, would require the Department of Defense to implement a pilot program to test the blood of children who currently live on military bases, or have within the last 10 years, where exposures to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, have occurred.

The bill also would require the DOD to provide Congress with a summary of the results of the pilot, including the extent of exposures.

The chemicals were used for decades in firefighting foams at the former Naval Air Station-Joint Reserve Base Willow Grove and active Horsham Air Guard Station, and the former Naval Air Warfare Center Warminster, as well as New

Jersey's active Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. They've been linked to a range of health effects, including certain types of cancers, as well as developmental and immune issues in children.

More than 400 bases could have some type of drinking water contamination caused by PFAS, according to the DOD.

"The health risks of PFAS impact everyone in our community, but we need to look out for our most vulnerable — children who live at military facilities like Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst," said Kim, whose district includes the base. "In order to bring real solutions to these PFAS issues, we need to determine the true scope of the problem. These testing programs will do just that and work to keep our children and communities safe."

There are approximately 1.7 million children dependents of servicemembers, including 1.07 million children of active-duty servicemembers, worldwide, Dean's office said in a statement. Those who live on bases are "particularly susceptible" to PFAS exposures as a result of the use of foams in trainings and emergencies.

"PFAS contamination touches nearly everyone in America, and none more than the children of servicemembers living on or near military bases," Dean said. "We know these chemicals are dangerous, and we must do everything we can to mitigate the health risks young people face. Our servicemembers enlist to protect us — and we must do the same for them and their children."

Karen Ruedisueli, deputy director of government relations for the National Military Family Association said the organization supports the bill and appreciates the work on behalf of military families.

"Recent revelations about toxic exposures in military housing and on military installations demand a public health response," Ruedisueli said. "This legislation is an important first step to determine the extent to which military children have been exposed to PFAS contamination on military installations."

Valerie Secrease, who worked at the base in Willow Grove for about 26 years as a civilian and reservist, has been outspoken on behalf of fellow servicemembers and civilian employees. She agreed the bill was a good first step, but said many would still ask "What about us?"

“We need our military members and civilians who lived on those bases tested,” she said, noting that ongoing lawsuits seeking blood testing could take years. “It angers me when I see my friends so sick and dying.”