

# United States Senate

May 6, 2020

The Honorable John Henderson  
Assistant Secretary of the Air Force  
Energy, Installations, and Environment  
1160 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20310-1160

Dear Assistant Secretary Henderson,

I am concerned by the Air Force's response to date regarding PFAS contamination at former Wurtsmith Air Force Base near Oscoda. This is an issue that you and I have discussed several times, including during your visit to Oscoda with me last year. I write again today to request your continued personal engagement to protect public health and help mitigate growing costs to taxpayers associated with continued delays in cleaning up the contamination.

For a full decade the State of Michigan and the Air Force have debated the scale and scope of contamination, yet have failed to come to terms and to initiate clean-up of the toxic PFAS contamination stemming from the base. During this time – and despite repeatedly expressing their concerns – Michigan families residing around the base have been forced to live with the health and safety consequences due to exposure to these chemicals. After helping secure more than \$13.5 million for environmental restoration efforts at Wurtsmith — and given that there's data available from many years of studies and investigations that have been conducted--it is unacceptable that the Air Force is not taking more immediate steps toward restoration. The veterans who served at Wurtsmith and the residents of Oscoda deserve better.

We have a shared goal of moving quickly to award a contract to conduct the Remedial Investigation stage work, which will require continued close coordination and agreement between the Air Force and the State of Michigan. But this ongoing process does not preclude the Air Force from taking interim remedial actions to protect human health from imminent threats – as well as to prevent the further migration of contaminants.

Congress provided additional funding in FY2020 to enable the Remedial Investigation contract to be awarded, as well as to enable the Air Force to abate further harm to public health and the environment. It is abundantly clear that contamination is spreading from the base, and we know the Air Force's treatment efforts to date will not adequately capture and stop continued spread.

I continue to call on the Air Force to take every action possible to quickly and effectively minimize the continued spread and harm from PFAS contamination. There also must be more

transparency with the community about the Air Force's plan moving forward. I will not stop pressing for swift action until the Air Force does its part to remediate this area and protect the surrounding community from further contamination. In this context, I request answers to the following questions:

- 1) With five months remaining in the Fiscal Year, is the Air Force on track to award a contract for Remedial Investigation, in agreement with the state of Michigan? If not, what are the remaining points of uncertainty or contention?
- 2) Will the Air Force commit to undertaking interim remedial actions to protect human health and prevent the further migration of contaminants? If not, why not, and what data or information does the Air Force require at this time to justify taking additional action within the Fiscal Year?

Thank you for your continued attention to this essential issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gary C. Peters". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gary" being the most prominent.

Gary C. Peters