

March 6, 2025

Dear Oregon legislators,

I am writing this letter to you because PFAS are personal to me, and if you don't know it already, they are also personal to you.

My husband Michael and I were blessed with two beautiful daughters. We both had vocations within church ministry and could buy a house in the suburbs. Could life get any better? Probably not. But then, out of nowhere, life got a whole lot worse.

Not that many years ago, my husband and I learned that we had been raising our family on the world's largest underground plume of PFAS-contaminated water. In the fall of 2017, our 15-year-old daughter Amara was diagnosed with a rare form of liver cancer, fibrolamellar hepatocellular carcinoma. An athlete, good student, budding musician, composer, vocalist, and active church member, our daughter developed a cancer that had no known treatment or cure.

When Amara was first diagnosed, she told us she was concerned that her cancer was due to the "cancer water" that her classmates in high school joked about. We quickly learned that it was no joke, and many, many students from Tartan High School, along with their family members, had developed cancer. We were just the latest family.

In five years, from age 15-20, Amara had endured radiation, chemotherapy, and over 20 surgeries. She graduated high school and completed two years of college work in music production before we ran out of treatment options. At the age of 20, Amara began at-home hospice care.

Hospice is not just about endings. It was the beginning of Amara's advocacy work to speak out about the forever chemicals in our water. Every human on the planet now has PFAS in their blood, including penguins and polar bears. Our planet has been poisoned with the insidious toxins of PFAS. All it takes is for this chemical to react with one cell in your DNA that might be vulnerable at any unknown time, and poof!—the time bomb of PFAS has upended a life. Amara began testifying at the MN State Capitol not for herself but for her community. She wanted to protect our community from enduring illness and cancer as a result of PFAS poisoning. Her advocacy started with a local reporter soon after she began hospice, and her advocacy at the capitol took all of her energy in the last four months of her life. Amara died at home with her younger sister, Nora, Michael, and I at her side. We breathed with her as she gasped for her last breath. A few days later, the PFAS prevention bill passed, and the legislators named it "Amara's Law," the country's most comprehensive PFAS prevention law.

Now, all along the way, Amara heard the testimony of chemical industry lobbyists present that PFAS are not all that dangerous or that there was a safe level for exposure. She heard them talk about how difficult it would be to retool manufacturing facilities to use an alternative to toxic PFAS. Some said we could go ahead and try to ban it from non-essential products, but the state would never find a way to oversee and enforce the law. Amara knew it would be hard, but she also knew that people can do hard things. She had survived this cancer for five and a half years. In excruciating pain, she allowed me to help her dress, her sister to do her makeup, and her dad to transport her in a wheelchair. (Something no one else saw as she hid the wheelchair and walked through the Capitol so no one would pity her.) It took three to four hours for her to be ready to leave the house for the

Capitol at various committees and two days to recover from such an outing. Amara knew hard in a way that the lobbyists could never imagine.

When I hear the chemical industry and lobbyists say they will find an alternative to PFAS someday, I know they are lying. There is no someday for corporations that are making billions off of poisoning us. They are not incentivized to find an alternative unless we ban PFAS. 3M has known since the 1970s that PFAS were dangerous. In the deposition of 3M's toxicologist, he says that they knew the PFAS they were making were "insidiously toxic." Some of these depositions are included in the documentary "Revealed: How to Poison a Planet." This documentary tells the story of what 3M knew about PFAS and the devastation these PFAS, made in St. Paul, MN, had on an indigenous community in Australia, as well as the neighborhood around 3M, including Amara's story. I hope you will watch it.

Revealed: How To Poison A Planet

<https://app.frame.io/d/19005d41-a82e-4edc-8d84-60601452f0b1>

PFAS poisoning is personal. My family has been poisoned; our neighbors, people across our state, this country, and our world have been poisoned. You are poisoned.

How much money is your child's life worth? If you felt your grandchild was worth a million bucks and timed it times the speed of light and then tripled it... would the dollar amount be enough to risk their life? Big corporations care about their bottom line; brilliant corporations care about improving life on the planet. Demand that the chemical industry be innovative and brilliant. They can find alternatives, but we must provide the incentive. Ban PFAS. It never was just about Amara. It's about all of us.

Sincerely,

Dana Fath Strande