



**To:** Committee members in the House Natural Resources, Environment, Tourism Committee

**Re:** Support for HB 4083, introduced by Representative Julie Rogers: prohibiting perchloroethylene in dry cleaning solvents

**Submitted:** March 9, 2023

**From:** Erica Bloom, Toxics Campaign Director and Melissa Cooper Sargent, Environmental Health Advocate

The Ecology Center supports HB 4083, a bill to ban perchloroethylene (perc) in the dry cleaning industry. Perc is a probable human carcinogen with acute toxicity characteristics, negative impacts on the central nervous system and worker exposure concerns associated with its volatile nature (1).

Unfortunately, improper use, storage and disposal of perc have resulted in widespread contamination of groundwater and soil at dry cleaning sites (1). Perc was developed in the 1930s to replace the extremely flammable petroleum-based solvents available at the time. However, perc is highly volatile, meaning it readily evaporates into the air and easily off-gasses into the environment.

A 2012 Toxicological Review by the EPA concluded that exposure to perc is linked to bladder cancer, multiple myeloma, and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, as well as esophageal, kidney, lung, liver, cervical, and breast cancers. In addition, some studies show that women working in dry cleaning facilities have high rates of miscarriage and seek fertility services more often. The developing fetus, children, and especially their developing nervous system may be particularly susceptible to the toxic effects of perc (2, 3).

The Ecology Center spoke with Mr. Chung, owner of H2O Cleaners, a small family-owned laundry business in Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan. Mr. Chung agreed to have his comments included in this testimony. Twenty years ago Mr. Chung switched his business to wet cleaning as an alternative to using perc. He has skin allergies so wearing the clothes that he dry cleaned himself gave him rashes where the clothes touched his skin. He was also worried about exposing his small children and bringing the chemicals home on his clothes. He wouldn't allow them to hug or touch him when he walked in the door after work.

Although other safe and effective choices exist, perc is still the most commonly used solvent in the dry cleaning industry in the United States. Wet cleaning is a safer and effective process in which cleaners use detergents and special machines with computer operated controls that strictly manage each phase of the cleaning process.

Mr. Chung points out that machines that do wet cleaning need to be more affordable. He believes the state of Michigan should help finance the switch from perc to wet cleaning by offering small businesses funds to purchase machines and pay for training.

The Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Institute has a Factsheet on Alternatives to Perchloroethylene Used in Professional Garment Care. Wet cleaning and six other alternatives are listed as safe and effective. The document also includes a summary comparing perc and seven garment cleaning alternatives. We've attached this document with our testimony.

In 2021, Minnesota unanimously passed legislation to ban perc. Under the new law, the state will provide \$213,000 in financial assistance to dry cleaners for cleanup efforts as well as fund a \$355,000 cost-share program to help these businesses transition away from the use of perchloroethylene (4). Michigan should follow the lead of Minnesota and ban perchlorethylene in our state.

#### References

1. *Massachusetts Safer Alternatives Fact Sheet*. The Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Institute, University of Massachusetts Lowell.
2. Toxicological Profile for Tetrachloroethylene. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. June 2019 [www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxprofiles/tp18.pdf](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxprofiles/tp18.pdf)
3. *Regulatory Information Sector, Dry Cleaning Sector*. Environmental Protection Agency. [www.epa.gov/regulatory-information-sector/dry-cleaning-sector-naics-8123](http://www.epa.gov/regulatory-information-sector/dry-cleaning-sector-naics-8123)
4. Orr, Carolyn. *With unanimous legislative support, Minnesota bans use of perchloroethylene by dry cleaners*. The Council of State Governments Midwestern Office. April 20, 2021. [www.csgmidwest.org/2021/04/20/with-unanimous-legislative-support-minnesota-bans-use-of-perchloroethylene-by-dry-cleaners/](http://www.csgmidwest.org/2021/04/20/with-unanimous-legislative-support-minnesota-bans-use-of-perchloroethylene-by-dry-cleaners/)

#### Attachments

*Massachusetts Safer Alternatives Fact Sheet*. The Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Institute, University of Massachusetts Lowell.