

My name is Michele Baker, a single Mom, daughter and homeowner in the Town of Hoosick with a private well polluted with the carcinogen PFOA.

PFOA can cause diseases such as kidney cancer, ulcerative colitis, thyroid disease, preeclampsia and a host of other health problems. It has already caused countless injuries in Hoosick Falls.

Our town was in shock after learning the water we had been drinking for decades was contaminated with PFOA, a toxic chemical illegally dumped by Saint Gobain and Honeywell.

Today's hearings answered some questions, but leave many more unanswered. Why did these companies dump these dangerous chemicals rather than making sure they did escape into the environment? Why were we allowed to drink contaminated water for an additional 18 months once the cat was out of the bag about the contamination? Village residents were first notified about the dangers of their drinking water on their water bills, but residents, such as myself with a private well, were never told to test our water until I spoke up and began questioning officials.

At this point I became increasingly concerned, and I was not getting any answers from local lawmakers or government agencies. I called the County Executive, the Department of Health and countless others. No one could help my family and we were left on our own searching for answers about the problem and hazards in our drinking water.

I am a homeowner in Hoosick Falls and like many of my neighbors, the news of PFOA contamination hit me when I was applying to refinance the mortgage on my house. In the weeks to come I did not realize the American Dream of owning a home would be shattered. My home has decreased substantially in value because two reckless and careless companies polluted our water source.

In early January the bank denied my application and I was told the bank would not refinance my loan because of the water crisis in Hoosick Falls. When I tried to explain that I lived outside the village and have a private well, I was told they were no longer approving mortgages. Our entire town could not get a mortgage or refinance their loans because we lacked potable water.

At the end of January, DOH came out to my house and tested my water at my kitchen faucet. My test results came back two weeks later and my water tested positive for PFOA. The news was devastating to me and my family. We thought our water would be safe living nearly three miles away from Saint Gobain's manufacturing plant, a false sense of security. I've lived in my home for nearly 19 years, drinking PFOA laden water night and day. My eyes filled up with tears at the news. How could this happen? What do I do? My god I drank this water while I was pregnant and developed a nearly deadly case of preeclampsia. My daughter, Mikayla was born weeks premature with serious health problems. The guilt I felt 14 years ago came rushing back again, what did I do to my little girl? I almost lost her. What will happen to her now? What are the long-term effects of PFOA, what about her blood levels, my Mom's blood levels and mine? We won't know for years to come, this is the fear I live with every day as a mother and daughter. Our community deserves a biomonitoring program to begin immediately.

With my well water test results in hand I needed to take action, all of the news reports had been focusing on PFOA being found in the municipal system, and no one had addressed the potentially thousands of contaminated private wells. Immediately I contacted DEC to install a POET system on my private well, which reduced – but did not eliminate -- the levels of PFOA in my home's drinking water. I've learned that I will require a POET indefinitely to filter PFOA from my water.

Despite having the filter, I'm still worried about the test results and no one drinks our well water. We live off bottled-water, even the dog. No one from NYS is admitting that PFOA could possibly adhere to our pipes. They did not test our faucets ever again, they only test from a valve attached to the filtration system New York State installed. Testing from our faucets could show a much different PFOA test result. We deserve more testing on our pipes and the water we drink and bathe in.

Upon learning of the contamination Saint Gobain quickly began paying for bottled water for residents and installed a temporary water filtration system in the village. But that is NOT enough. Clearly the polluters know that their business practices have led to the contamination of our greatest asset, clean safe drinking water –something we all need to survive.

Bottled water and filters are the first step, but not nearly enough. Testing must take place more often and with a commitment to transparency-- 100% of the time to the residents of this community. We deserve a clean, safe drinking water source and the polluters must pay for it.

I've asked Senator Marchione, NYSDOH and NYSDEC to post health advisories, warning people not to eat fish caught in the Hoosick River until we have sediment and water results and issue warnings especially for our kids, about the dangers of swimming in the river. No one has answered my pleas.

I'm also calling on Governor Cuomo to take a leadership role to prevent the next water crisis in New York State. This spring the EPA issued a long term PFOA health advisory of 70 parts per trillion. Governor Cuomo, the children of New York deserve a lower acceptable level of PFOA to match that of our neighboring states. Despite the fact the Hoosick landfill was named a superfund site less than 24 hours ago.

Our beautiful town of Hoosick Falls --that thousands of us call home --deserves a plan and time-line outlining how and when the water, air and soil of this community will be contamination free and we can go back to living a safe and secure life.