

Date: February 13th, 2023

To: Agriculture, Forestry and Conservation Committee

From: Cole Cochrane, Maine Youth Action

Re: Supporting LD 289, An Act to Require the State to Purchase Farms Contaminated with Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances



Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker, and the esteemed members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee. My name is Cole Cochrane and I write on behalf of Maine Youth Action, a statewide youth-led advocacy group that represents hundreds of our youth across the state. We write to express our support of LD 289, An Act to Require the State to Purchase Farms Contaminated with Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances.

Without a shred of doubt, farmers have been severely impacted by PFAS contaminated lands and have borne the brunt of this disaster. Seeping through their waters and soil, they have seen their animals and crops threatened by PFAS substances. Moreover, farmers simply do not have the resources to combat this problem, and therefore jeopardizes the stability of their livelihoods. The ones affected are not corporations looking for a handout. The affected are hard working families trying to make an honest living. For example, from a personal perspective, my great Uncle in the small town of Parkman owns a farm. Uncle Hank not only owns his own farm, but works with others in the area baling hay. When PFAS became a headline issue, I asked him about it. He said that an overwhelming number of Parkman's farmers, his friends and colleagues, faced PFAS contamination in their soils, in their waters, and in their animals. He believed that they all got the short end of the stick and faced consequences that they never knew were there. Although this may be a personal observation, I may confidently say that this is not the only town deeply affected by this issue. Therefore, we believe that LD 289 will be able to effectively address this situation and mitigate the aftermath of PFAS. The merits of this bill are without question. This is a way for the government to hold itself accountable by rectifying a mistake of permitting PFAS substances to be used as fertilizer. It is not reasonable to assume that farmers would have known

the negative impacts associated with using these residuals and it was the responsibility of DEP to make sure that what farmers used as fertilizer was healthy for the soil, for the waters, and for the public. Let this be an opportunity to prove to not only those affected that the government will hold itself accountable and assist them, but to our youth that the government plays a role in righting wrongs and can be trusted that they will fulfill this responsibility. I urge the committee to vote “ought to pass” on LD 289, in order to directly assist PFAS impacted farmers and restore trust in government.