

Testimony of Johanna Davis– impacted farmer

In SUPPORT of LD 132 “An Act to Require Health Insurance Carriers to Provide Coverage for Blood testing for Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances”

Senator Baily, Congresswoman Perry and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee. My name is Johanna Davis. I am co-owner of Songbird Farm in Unity Maine and currently work at Villageside Farm in Freedom. I am testifying in support of LD 132.

A year and a half ago my family’s life was completely upended after the discovery of PFAS contamination on our farm. Sludge that had been spread on our fields 20 years before we moved there had highly contaminated our soil, our water and our plants. In the early days of this discovery we scrambled to have as much as we could tested. That included soils from different fields, water from multiple wells and numerous different vegetable and grain samples. Additionally, both my husband and I and our three-year-old child had our blood tested. As the tests came back and we learned a little more about what and how much was contaminated we started to plan out how we might continue to live in our home and keep our business afloat, given the right filters and growing only certain crops. As we waited for our serum tests to come back we worked with a professional who helped draw up an estimate of what we could expect our blood levels to look like given the results of the environment around us. Once we finally did get the blood tests back some of those estimates were right, however some of our levels grossly exceeded their prediction. I tell this story because this information from the blood test told us what to do. Staying on that land, breathing in that highly contaminated dust every time we plow and cultivate, letting our child play in the dusty dirt in a greenhouse with his toy tractors...that wasn’t safe. Seeing what was in our blood gave us information. No one should be denied that. It is still an unexplained question of why my family has the amount of some of the PFAS chemicals in our blood that we do and currently there is no treatment available to help us lower those levels. However, we do know that we need to have health monitoring check ups and that we have a much higher risk for a large variety of illnesses. We do know that we can’t keep exposing ourselves to high levels of these chemicals. And because of this information we knew that we had to shut down our business and leave our home.

There are a lot of unknowns with PFAS. The more information that can be had the better. Anyone who is at risk of PFAS exposure should be able to get tested regardless of their means. Whether its school children, fire fighters, farmers or rural residents, a blood test for PFAS could mean then a link to an early detection of an illness or disease which in turn could then save a life...or many.

Please support this bill