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Testimony in OPPOSITION to LD 1214

An Act to Clarify the Laws to Combat Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Contamination **Dana Colihan, Co-Executive Director | April 26th, 2023**

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and Members of the Environment & Natural Resources Committee,

I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 1214, an Act to Clarify the Laws to Combat Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substance Contamination. At Slingshot we envision a world where everyone can live, work, and play in communities that are safe, healthy, and sustainable. We envision a PFAS-free world where we address the harms of PFAS contamination, and we do everything we can to address the horrific impact of these chemicals on our communities and environment—which is why we must oppose LD1214.

Whether your community is facing polluted water, a leaking landfill or air pollution from oil tanks in your backyard, you deserve to know the facts, make your voice heard, and create the changes you want to see. Slingshot is an environmental justice organization, working alongside communities most impacted by environmental health threats to take aim at polluters and build community power.

We are currently facing one of the largest water contamination crises of our time. Communities around the country are discovering daily that their water is polluted with per and polyfluoroalkyl substances or PFAS. PFAS are a toxic, man-made class of chemicals, commonly known as “forever chemicals,” which were created by chemical companies for things like non-stick coating or fire fighting foam. However, PFAS have been linked to serious health impacts like kidney cancer, reduced immune system function, thyroid disease, liver damage, and more.

We co-facilitate the National PFAS Contamination Coalition, which is composed of 30 community groups from across the country, including Maine, that are directly impacted by PFAS. The coalition is fighting for a world where people are not exposed to any PFAS, where there is justice for the victims of PFAS exposure, and where laws and regulations prevent contamination disasters like this from happening again. From this work, we have witnessed the harm PFAS have on our bodies, families, and environment.

If we hope to address this contamination crisis, this bill takes us ten steps in the wrong direction, especially in the re-defining of PFAS .

If I spilled a bucket of tacks on the ground, and half of them are blue and half of them are red, I enlist my friends and neighbors to support me in cleaning up this dangerous mess. But a minute into this clean up I say, "After further consideration, actually the only thing we are defining as tacks are the red ones. Please leave the blue ones on the ground." Everyone knows that if this is our approach to cleaning up this mess, people are still going to get hurt. If that is our approach in defining PFAS as this bill does, our communities are still going to get hurt. However, the harms of PFAS are much more serious than a pile of dropped tacks.

Gutting the definition for PFAS is the approach that has been pushed by the American Chemistry Council, an approach that has been pushed by polluters to shirk responsibility for knowingly producing and profiting off of chemicals that have serious negative health impacts.

We need to maintain our current, comprehensive definition of PFAS which is "any member of the class of fluorinated organic chemicals containing at least one fully fluorinated carbon atom."

LD1214 also dangerously removes the ban on PFAS containing pesticides, as well eliminates the presumptive phase out of non-essential PFAS by 2030. At a time when Europe is pursuing an even more comprehensive phase-out of PFAS chemicals, now is not the time to double back on Maine's progress.

The writing is on the wall. PFAS are incredibly toxic chemicals. Maine needs to do everything in our power to address this contamination crisis by ensuring remediation, making polluters pay, and turning off the tap of contamination. LD1214 points us in the wrong direction, which is why we urge the committee to vote unanimously "out not to pass." Thank you.