

Representative Meyer, Senator Claxton, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Harsha Somaya, a student studying in Maine. I am testifying in strong support of LD1488. I begin by admitting that I rarely gave thought to my water. I assumed it was clean. In reality, there are gaps in our water quality. I am grateful to have public water regulated by the EPA and Maine CDC, but worry for those who access water from private wells that are outside of these laws. Are they aware of their water quality? Do they use water filters? Perhaps they do not, for how could toxic chemicals find themselves deep in an isolated well?

Yet, the reality is our people, land, and water are contaminated with PFAS. We never consented to these forever substances; they proliferated without our knowledge. PFAS are linked to at least six diseases, including high cholesterol, lung cancer, and thyroid disease. I suspect their effects range beyond these six. Farms have shut down due to PFAS-contaminated sludge infecting their soil, livestock, aquifers and wells.

The EPA's proposal to limit PFOA and PFOS stringently at 4 parts per trillion in drinking water indicates that exposure should be very limited. At the very least, we should know if our water is contaminated. Other states have acted – for example, Vermont passed Act 21, which requires approximately 650 public community and nontransient noncommunity water systems to test for PFAS. If testing is required and residents are informed by landlords, they can use this awareness to take appropriate action. Either way, requiring testing reveals knowledge about an essential component of our health: drinking water. This testing should not be limited to only those with public water, for we all need clean water and are all affected by PFAS. Hence, I strongly encourage the passing of LD1488 for the health of everyone. Thank you for your consideration.

Harsha Somaya

Waterville, ME