

Testimony of Madeline McDonough, Colby College student, Waterville, ME
In SUPPORT of LD 1006 and LD 1488,
“An Act to Ensure Access to Healthy Drinking Water from Household Wells in Rural Maine”
**“An Act to Expand Testing for Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances to Private Drinking
Water Wells”**
Before the Health and Human Services Committee
April 28th, 2023

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Madeline McDonough and I am a senior at Colby College with a major in Global Studies and Environmental Studies; within those disciplines I concentrate on human health.

Please accept this testimony in support of LD 1006 and LD 1488, which would expand access to clean drinking water to low income Mainers and protect renters and home buyers from bodily harm from PFAS exposure.

I wish to include my voice in the legislative effort because of what I saw working in Maine in the summer of 2022 on well water testing outreach and education. My efforts mainly consisted of outreach to rural communities with residential wells. I spoke with hundreds of people during the course of the summer with varying understandings, opinions, and abilities to test for contaminants in their well water. I grew concerned because many were not informed about the threat to themselves and families that PFAS poses. Many even opposed testing their wells in fear of learning their water was unsafe and the following financial burden.

The State of Maine should be concerned about PFAS in its drinking water because these chemicals are a risk to human health. This large family of toxics are persistent, bioaccumulative, and mobile. This means that PFAS's negative effects on human and environmental health is difficult to mitigate and gets harder to prevent the longer it is left unaddressed. A study conducted in 2007 titled: *Body of Evidence: A Study of Pollution in Maine People*, revealed that PFOA and PFOS were detected in all the subjects. CDC biomonitoring has shown similar statistics, revealing all Americans have PFAS in their blood. PFAS is called a 'forever chemical' because it does not degrade. The persistence of this chemical and its toxicity to wildlife and humans raises concern of substantial risk to human and environmental health. The Stockholm Convention designated PFOS in annex B regulatory category which agreed the pollutant be restricted in use. Annex B is also the designation for DDT, the toxic chemical which was widely used in insecticide and written about by Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring* that nearly destroyed the Bald Eagle population in Maine.

The state of Maine is implicated in a legacy of PFAS when it unknowingly spread a bio waste sludge serving as fertilizer mainly in the 1970's for many farms near Colby and across Maine. Although this is well known now, additional PFAS enters our water systems every day due to household waste (PFAS-containing product use and businesses which intentionally or unintentionally use PFAS).

The beautiful bodies of water in Maine are contaminated with PFAS. Where I live in Waterville, the Kennebec Water District drinking water sourced from China Lake has unsafe levels of PFAS. This is a concern for human health because the scientific literature has clearly indicated the adverse effects of

PFAS, which includes increased risk of liver, testicular, and pancreatic tumors. There are also researchers in Denmark, Sweden, Italy and China who showed that higher blood or urinary PFAS concentrations are linked to higher risk of Covid-19 infection, and subsequent severe illness and death.

However, Maine has been a leader in PFAS regulation to date and while we cannot stop the production of PFAS in this session, passing LD1006 and LD1488 would allow for people whose well water is contaminated and unsafe to drink, the opportunity to filter their source of water.

While I understand this may be costly for the state to undertake, one must ask, why is the burden on the individual? These rural Maine communities are residents of Maine and deserve safe drinking water just as those in urban areas. There is a lack of infrastructure supporting these individuals or families that the state is able to provide and should do so for the health of its residents.

My work that summer gave me human understanding of this issue so I'll end my testimony with a brief reflection: While many people were eager to test their well water for free, there were a lot of individuals who were apprehensive about testing their water due to the anticipated cost of remediation or filtration. If Maine residents were knowledgeable about available grants, they may be incentivized to test their water, avoiding disastrous health consequences later in life. 'Forever chemicals' inflict harm on the human body and have been found to be widespread in human bodies and water. The state must provide equal access to clean water for all Maine residents.

I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1006 and LD 1488.

Thank you for your time,

Madeline McDonough, Colby College '23, Waterville, ME