

Legislative Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
c/o Clerk Marianne MacMaster
Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and distinguished members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

Please accept these comments in opposition to LD 1960, *An Act to Support Farming in Maine by Extending the Deadline for Manufacturers of Products Containing Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances to Report on Those Products*. PFAS are already wreaking havoc on the farming community. I urge you to uphold the original language of LD 2013, which protects the livelihood and health of farmers and the health of consumers. Please vote ought not pass on LD 1960.

You are all well aware of the impacts that PFAS contamination continues to have in Maine. The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry is currently working with 68 farms with contamination exceeding safe levels. Four of these farms have gone out of business. The Department of Environmental Protection, who has identified 484 residential wells that have been unacceptably poisoned with the chemicals near sludge or septage sites. Some of the wells are severely poisoned, and the Mainers who have been drinking that water have some of the very highest documented PFAS exposure in the country. Many are suffering from PFAS linked illnesses, including kidney and liver problems, thyroid disorders and various cancers.

We understand that Maine taxpayers are fronting over one hundred million dollars to provide clean drinking water to impacted rural communities and to help mitigate the worst impacts to contaminated farms. But how do we calculate the costs of the PFAS-linked illnesses suffered and the lives lost since those 484+ drinking water wells and the 68+ farms became contaminated over the past forty years? Those costs – and the associated trauma - have been born privately by the impacted community.

While Maine's PFAS investigation has been centered around the historic impacts of sludge and septage, pesticides have emerged as area of deep concern. The chemical PFOS has been detected in pesticides at levels as high as 19,000,000 parts per trillion, while Maine's interim drinking water standard is 20 parts per trillion, and EPA is proposing a national safe drinking water limit of only 4 ppt. It would take only a tiny amount of this hyper-toxic pesticide to contaminate someone's drinking water beyond 20 ppt or 4 ppt. But drinking water contamination might be the least of our worries considering the other ways we interact with pesticides. The potential for respiratory and dermal exposure to PFAS-laden pesticides for farm workers is high. And since pesticides are applied directly to food crops, we should all be concerned about our exposure to the chemicals as consumers.

The PFAS crisis has taught us that when the state turns a blind eye to the use of toxic substances on farms, everyone suffers. Farm businesses are put at risk. The health of farmers, farmworkers and their rural neighbors are put at risk. The health of consumers is put at risk. The brand of Maine agriculture is tarnished, and trust in the food supply is damaged. Any exemption to the reporting requirements for PFAS in pesticides or to the 2030 ban would represent an enormous step backwards for the farming community and the safety of the Maine food supply. Please vote unanimously ought not to pass.

Sincerely,

Adam Nordell
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