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LD 130

Good afternoon Senator Talbot - Ross, Representative Pluecker, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. My name is Eben Sumner, I'm from West Baldwin, Maine. I am the co-founder of TerraGenix, a company focused on PFAS soil remediation using industrial hemp.

I am also a concerned citizen regarding Maine's agricultural and environmental future. I strongly support the establishment of the PFAS Response Program and the modifications to the Fund to Address PFAS Contamination, as outlined in this bill. Protecting our farms, food supply, and public health from the risks associated with PFAS contamination is critical. Equally as important to protecting Maine's citizens is the need to address clean up of these harmful, forever chemicals are already posing such a sever risk.

I appreciate that this bill not only creates a comprehensive response to address and mitigate PFAS contamination but also includes important financial support measures to assist affected commercial farms, and cleanup. I believe that the integration of testing support, technical assistance, and on-farm mitigation and remediation strategies will help our agricultural producers maintain viable operations and safeguard our communities.

That said, I do have a couple of important questions regarding the implementation details of this bill:

The bill requires the establishment of an advisory committee, with two co-chairs drawn from its members. Could you clarify how the composition of this committee will be determined? Specifically, who will select the members, and what criteria or process will be used to ensure that the committee represents the diverse perspectives of our agricultural producers, public health experts, and local communities?

The bill also mentions that financial assistance will be provided to PFAS-impacted agricultural producers for testing, on-farm remediation and mitigation, and other necessary adjustments. While I understand that proceeds from the sale or lease of contaminated property will be deposited into the Fund, could you elaborate on how sustainable and sufficient this funding source is expected to be? In other words, what measures are in place to ensure that this financial support will consistently meet the needs of affected areas?

In closing, I want to reiterate my support for the bill. I believe that with clear guidelines on advisory committee formation and transparent funding mechanisms, Maine can lead the way in safeguarding and revitalizing both our agricultural industry and public health from the challenges of PFAS contamination.

Thank you for your time and consideration.