

Testimony of Haley Norris, Lieutenant at Morrill Vol. Fire Dept. Morrill, ME.
In SUPPORT of LD 222 and LD 400

Before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee
February 26th, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Haley Norris. I am a resident of Morrill Maine and am currently a Lieutenant on the Morrill Volunteer Fire Department. Please accept this testimony in support of LD 222 and LD 400, which would create programs to inventory, safely store and eventually safely dispose of PFAS laden fire-fighting foam.

I have been a firefighter for seven years with experience first working with the China Village Department, and now the Morrill Department. In that time I have gone to countless fires, including both McCrum factory fires, and have interacted with somewhere around 20 other departments thanks to our collaborative responses. Though I am extremely proud to have braved many dangerous situations in the name of helping the community, I find the invisible dangers of exposures to chemicals to be increasingly worrisome especially as I face my own infertility and think about the future firefighters who would like to join. If there are any chemicals that we can opt to eliminate like PFAS in AFFF and incentives we can give to departments to make that easier, we should absolutely do it.

Despite my best efforts to protect myself, there have been many, many, times where I have been soaked to the bone with AFFFs containing PFAS. This happens when we spray upwards and the water falls back in through the neck of our turnout gear. According to the NIH PFAS have been linked to a reduction in fertility by up to 40% in certain circumstances. As I am currently in the process of IVF, I often ask myself how these chemicals have had an impact on my own fertility and what it might mean for my future self and child.

In a time where fire departments across the country are struggling to attract and maintain members, especially younger volunteers, it seems foolish to allow PFAS in AFFF as it is a disincentive for young females to join.

In a time where fire departments across the country are struggling to attract and maintain members, will we have a generation of children who want to proudly follow in the footsteps of their firefighter parents, or will they have watched their firefighter parents die a cancer related death and not want to have the same happen to themselves?

We absolutely need to be thinking about the future of our struggling departments and do everything we can to maintain their health and safety. That is why I urge you to vote unanimously "Ought to Pass" on LD 222 and LD 400. It will make it a lot easier for departments to make the decision to step away from using these chemicals and pave the way for safer alternatives.

Thank you for your time,

Lt. Haley Norris,

Morrill Volunteer Fire Department