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Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Maine Legislature

Re: Support for LD 400 Reporting Requirement, LD 222: AFFF Take-Back Program, and LD 407 Brunswick Landing Cleanup by 2026.

Dear Chairperson Doudera and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rachel Fischer, and I write to you as a concerned citizen of Portland, a soon-to-be attorney in the state of Maine, and a professor of Environmental Law at Saint Joesph's College. I am writing in strong support of LD 400, which seeks to establish reporting requirements for AFFF storage, LD 222, which creates a take-back program for AFFF to ensure safe collection, storage, and disposal, and LD 407, which ensures the removal of all remaining AFFF from Brunswick Landing by 2026.

Why This Matters

The August 2024 spill at Brunswick Landing was a sobering reminder of the dangers posed by AFFF. As you know, 1,450 gallons of AFFF concentrate mixed with 50,000 gallons of water leaked into the environment, contaminating Mere Brook, Harpswell Cove, and the Androscoggin River. This was not just the largest AFFF spill in Maine history—it was the sixth-largest in the nation.

The toxic PFAS chemicals in AFFF are known to persist in the environment indefinitely, posing significant risks to human health, wildlife, and water quality. Studies link PFAS exposure to serious health effects, including cancer, immune system suppression, and developmental issues in children. This threat is especially concerning for communities like mine, which rely on clean water for drinking, recreation, and livelihoods.

The Solutions Proposed in These Bills

LD 400 establishes a critical reporting system for locations storing AFFF, empowering the Maine DEP to monitor and address potential risks. LD 222 takes this one step further by creating a take-back program to safely collect and store AFFF until a safe disposal method is available. LD 407 ensures the removal of all remaining AFFF from Brunswick Landing by 2026, eliminating the risk of another major spill at this site. Together, these bills take a proactive approach to preventing future contamination and protecting Maine's waterways.

My Personal Connection

As an outdoor enthusiast and budding environmental lawyer, I have witnessed the impact of PFAS in the environment and understand the grave consequences that these harmful chemicals have. In particular, the PFAS spill in Brunswick is especially concerning, considering that many people live in Maine in order to recreate in beautiful spaces and spend ample time outdoors expecting a healthy environment. The strength of the lobster industry in this state and the

reverence people near and far have for Maine seafood only compounds the concern about harmful chemicals in our waters.

Why I Support This Legislation

- **Protecting Public Health:** Mainers deserve to live without fear of toxic chemicals in their drinking water and communities.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Maine's waterways are central to our way of life. Ensuring they remain clean and healthy is not optional—it is a responsibility.
- **Proven Alternatives Exist:** Other states, including New Hampshire and Colorado, have adopted safer alternatives and established collection programs. Maine can and should follow their lead.

In conclusion, **LD 400**, **LD 222**, and **LD 407** are essential steps to safeguarding Maine's environment, protecting public health, and ensuring responsible management of AFFF. I urge you to vote in favor of these bills and take action to prevent further harm from PFAS chemicals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rachel Fischer

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