

Testimony IN SUPPORT
Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Public Hearing
February 26, 2025

LD 407 An Act to Prohibit the Use of Aqueous Film-forming Foam at the Former Brunswick Naval Air Station

LD 222 An Act to Establish a Take-back and Disposal Program for Firefighting and Fire-

suppressing Foam to Which Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Have Been Added

LD 400 Resolve, Directing the Department of Public Safety, Office of the State Fire Marshal to Compile a Statewide Inventory of Aqueous Film-forming Foam Concentrate

Chair Senator Tepler, Chair Representative Doudera and Honorable Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit **testimony in support of LD 407, LD 222, and LD 400**. My name is Jacquelyn Elliott and I live in Waterboro. I am a long-time environmental health and justice advocate. PFAS (per- and poly fluoroalkyl substances) contamination of our water, our environment, our wildlife and crops, our bodies, and the bodies of our children has emerged as an issue of significance for Maine and its citizens. The full extent of the impacts to public health and degradation of our environment is still evolving.

Maine is responding to the nightmare of PFAS pollution and is materializing as a leader navigating the on-going devastation from this class of forever toxic chemicals. PFAS have serious impacts to public and environmental health. The knowledge of harm is growing. These chemicals have been linked to cancer, immune system suppression, and developmental issues. PFAS break down very slowly and can remain in the environment indefinitely accumulating in water, air, soil, and living organisms. Importantly, recognizing the dire impacts of these toxic chemicals in the environment, Maine has acted to phaseout PFAS, including banning the use of firefighting foam that contains PFAS.

Alarmingly, in August 2024, a faulty fire suppression system at Brunswick Landing spilled 1,450 gallons of toxic PFAS-containing AFFF (aqueous film-forming foam) concentrate mixed with 50,000 gallons of water - the largest toxic foam spill in Maine history and the sixth-largest nationwide. The Brunswick spill entered the public sanitary sewer system discharging into the Androscoggin River. Nearby waterways were contaminated creating a serious, prolonged threat to soil, groundwater, air quality, and public health. The impacts are still being investigated.

This is history that could be repeated as there are multiple sites across Maine storing an estimated 50,000 gallons of AFFF, and there are no established systems for collection and management of this toxic foam. The State has an obligation to safeguard the health of its citizens and protect the environment in our communities. The State must implement programs to identify where AFFF is currently stored, develop a system for collection and removal of the toxic foam and commit resources in a way that shares burdens equitably avoiding disproportionate impacts on smaller communities. New Hampshire and Colorado provide a model for safely collecting and disposing of this toxic foam.

LD 407, LD 222, and LD 400 provide the framework for these important steps. Please pass these bills out of committee and continue Maine's leadership of addressing the threats posed by these toxic chemicals. Thank you for considering my comments.

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