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Dear Chairs Doudera and Hepler and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Jennifer Hicks. I am a resident of Brunswick and serve on the Town Council as a representative of District 5. I am speaking today in support of three bills that address the issue of PFAS-laden AFFF fire fighting foam in Maine: LD 200, LD 407, and LD 222. Together these pieces of legislation offer Maine's communities assurance that the environmental catastrophe that occurred in Brunswick won't happen again to anyone else.

As a Brunswick resident, I was horrified when I heard the news on August 19, 2024 that the former naval air base, now called Brunswick Landing, experienced the worst discharge of PFAS in Maine, and the 6th worst spill of these toxins in the history of our nation. The fire suppression system in Hangar 4 at the Brunswick Executive Airport had accidentally released almost all of the contents of its AFFF fire fighting foam into the hangar, which drained into the Town's stormwater system and ultimately into the groundwater, sewer plant, Mare Creek, and the Androscoggin river. For days, foam literally seeped out of manholes floated in the air, and filled stormwater retention ponds throughout Brunswick Landing, where many of my constituents reside. And though we no longer see it, the impacts of the spill are felt by my constituents outside of Brunswick Landing, downstream, whose wells are now testing at increased levels of PFAS. This substance is a known carcinogen and cause of devastating health problems including cancer, immune system suppression, and developmental issues.

Today, there is no AFFF in Hangar 4, but unfortunately, the owner of the Brunswick Executive Airport, MRRA, still has thousands of gallons of AFFF in its other two hangars - so Brunswick is still not safe. In fact, a spill from Hangar 6 would drain into the Town of Brunswick's main aquifer and shut down its public drinking water supply. I don't want to even think about how disastrous that would be for my community. Maine must act now to remove AFFF and prevent further contamination.

PFAS are persistent, widespread, and break down very slowly. They can remain in the environment for hundreds, and even thousands of years. They accumulate in water, air, soil, and living organisms, including people and wildlife. They have been detected

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across Maine and the world. The concentration of PFAS in AFFF firefighting foam is very high, and it doesn't take much to contaminate a water system. And as of now, the State of Maine does not know how much AFFF foam exists in the state or where it is.

An inventory will help the state make a plan and diligently work to get all of this toxic material out of our communities.

The good news is that once the AFFF foam is removed, safer alternatives can be used. States like New Hampshire and Colorado have moved away from AFFF and created collection programs. Maine must do the same.

Thank you for considering these three bills. As a community, we are relying on our elected officials to take proactive steps to ensure that we will never have to worry about the threat of another release and exposure to AFFF fire fighting foam, and eliminate a known source of the forever chemical, PFAS.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Hicks