

February 27, 2025
Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Maine Legislature

Re: LD 222 (AFFF takeback program)

Dear Chairpersons Doudera and Tepler and Members of the Committee,

I am testifying on LD 222 as an independent journalist, having [reported extensively last year](#) on the hazards of PFAS in and from firefighting.

LD 222 would fund a recommendation made five years ago by [Maine's PFAS Task Force](#), based on the work of an AFFF Working Group it appointed.

The Task Force also recommended that “the highest priority locations for [PFAS water] sampling should include locations where Class B AFFF has been discharged....” That systematic testing of fire stations and fire training areas was never funded.

When we [surveyed fire departments in the reporting project](#) last year, two-thirds of those reliant on wells had never tested their station drinking water for PFAS, citing as their reason “it has not been discussed/suggested.” Nearly all of the responding departments on wells indicated that they would participate in PFAS water testing if the State offered that at no cost.

An AFFF inventory and takeback program are critical steps to reduce the threat of future spills and inadvertent use. But [historic use of AFFF is also jeopardizing drinking water safety at and near some fire stations and fire training areas](#). Only testing can reveal which ones.

Amending LD 222 to fund this water sampling could more comprehensively address the threat AFFF poses for Maine citizens and first responders. As the Waldo firefighter noted in his testimony, there are homes and businesses near fire stations or training areas that may be at risk.

In the reporting project, we offered those who completed surveys free PFAS water testing: departments successfully completed those tests themselves (agreeing to share test results with us). Those screening tests, which have [performed well in split-sample comparisons with state-certified tests](#), cost only \$70 each in bulk – so providing them to fire departments to test their fire station well water, pumping sources (like farm ponds) and source waters near fire training areas could identify PFAS hot spots for under \$50,000—1 percent of the expected overall cost.

Based on the sampling process we undertook with fire departments, it could be beneficial to have one staff position at DEP to assist fire departments in preliminary screening and help municipalities that identify problems undertake additional testing. That position might serve as the sort of “[PFAS Navigator](#)” role that DACF funds to help guide affected farmers. DEP could provide cost estimates for that position and the follow-up testing that might be required at AFFF sites where initial screening determined a need for further investigation.

The State is finally poised to begin addressing AFFF threats to public health and first responders first identified in 2019. Adding PFAS water testing at sites of known past AFFF use would help ensure that Maine takes a comprehensive approach to reducing the substantial risks posed by PFAS-laden firefighting foam.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Marina Schauffler

Marina Schauffler
Independent Maine journalist