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Testimony in Support of LD 407, LD 222, & LD 400

Dana Colihan, Co-Executive Director | February 26th, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Members of the Environment & Natural Resources Committee,

My name is Dana Colihan, I am Co-Executive Director of Slingshot. I am testifying in support of LD 407, LD 222, and LD 400. Slingshot is an environmental health and justice organization, working alongside communities most impacted by environmental threats to take aim at polluters and build community power. We envision a PFAS-free world where we address the harms of PFAS contamination, and we do everything we can to address the horrific impact of these chemicals on our communities and environment, which is why we wholeheartedly support these three bills.

We are currently facing one of the largest contamination crises of our lifetime—with communities around the country discovering daily that their water is polluted with PFAS forever chemicals. Per and Polyfluoroalkyl substances or PFAS are a toxic, man-made class of chemicals, which were created by the chemical industry for things like non-stick coating or fire fighting foam. This aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) has been used at airports and military sites for decades, exposing firefighters, workers, and the surrounding communities to these toxic chemicals. PFAS have been linked to serious health impacts like kidney cancer, reduced immune system function, thyroid disease, liver damage, and more. Firefighters have higher rates of cancer exposure due to PFAS in their gear and in AFFF, which is why the International Association for Fire Fighters (IAFF) has been advocating for years to get PFAS out of both.

Slingshot co-facilitates the National PFAS Contamination Coalition, which is composed of 42 community groups from across the country, including Maine, that are directly impacted by PFAS. Locally, we have been supporting impacted residents in Brunswick experiencing

the horrible aftermath of the August AFFF spill. From this work, we have witnessed the harm PFAS have on our bodies, our families, and the environment.

We need to ensure that another AFFF spill like this never happens again. These three bills are crucial to protecting Maine from exposure to toxic forever chemicals.

First things first, currently there is still 5,700 gallons of PFAS-laden fire fighting foam in hangars at the Brunswick Executive Airport. Another spill there could be even worse, and exacerbate the existing contamination. Despite countless requests from community members, Brunswick United for a Safe Environment, as well as a resolution from the Brunswick Town Council, the Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority (MRRA) has not taken meaningful action to remove this remaining PFAS-laden foam from the airport. LD 407 would remove all remaining AFFF by 2026.

Second of all, the state currently does not have an accurate inventory of where AFFF is stored. Now more than ever we need to know where it is located. LD 400 would create an inventory of this PFAS-laden foam across the state.

And finally, we need to ensure this AFFF is collected and safely stored. LD 222 would do just that. Other states like New Hampshire and Colorado have already done this, and we know that safer alternatives exist. This will require resources, however it is worth the investment to protect our communities, our health, and environment from another disaster.

What happened in Brunswick has been awful – for impacted residents, for the waterways, for the environment, and for the community at large. We need to fight to protect Maine from another heartbreaking environmental disaster. We hope you take swift action to protect our communities and our environment by supporting all three of these bills.