

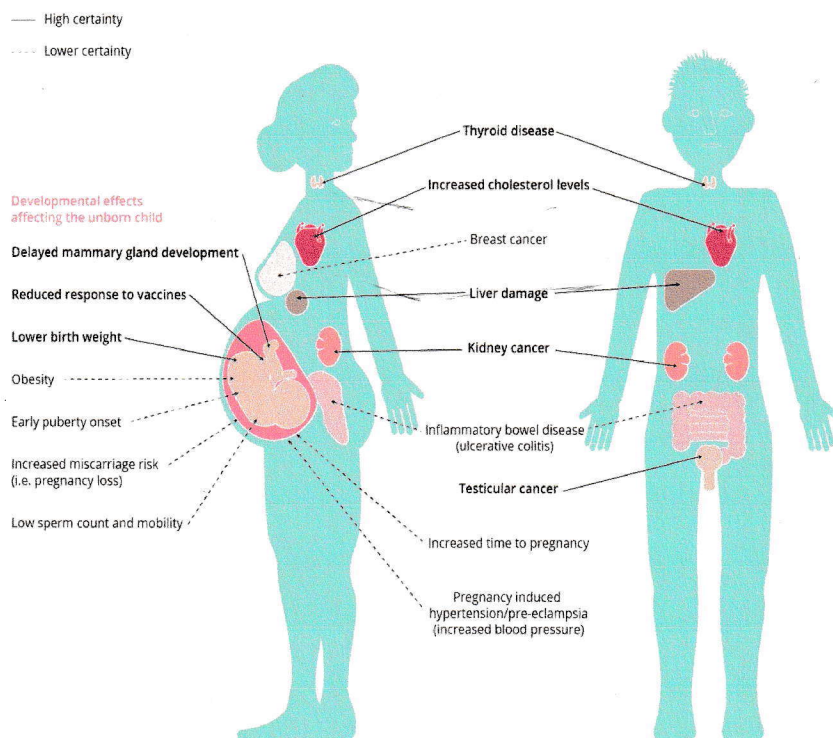
Testimony in opposition to LD 827 and LD 987 by Sydney R. Sewall, MD (Hallowell)

Sen. Tepler, Rep. Doudera and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

I am a pediatrician who has practiced in the Central Maine area since 1982, and have observed the increasing prevalence of developmental disorders, obesity, and other chronic diseases in our youth over my decades of practice. While the cause of this trend is multifactorial, chemical exposures are likely contributory. I am currently an officer of **PSR Maine**, a group of 300 medical professionals concerned with public health threats.

Some of you may recall the 2007 biomonitoring study titled **Body of Evidence** when it was distributed to all the members of the legislature. Thirteen Maine citizens (including a state representative) had their body fluids tested for 71 different chemicals and were surprised to find that they ALL had some toxins in their bodies – with an average of 36 different substances present in each subject. This was prior to the recognition of widespread PFAS contamination, and these compounds were not on the list. If we repeated the study today, we would find PFAS in every volunteer.

You are all aware of the fact that the accumulating data on health effects of PFAS exposure has led to lowering the acceptable limits in public water sources. Studies show associations with a variety of diseases:



European Environmental Agency 2019

While Maine was somewhat of a pioneer in 2021 with the passage of LD 1503, we are no longer alone in our attempts to keep citizens safe from PFAS in cookware – CO, MN, CT, VT and RI also have bans. LD 1537 was crafted over subsequent years and amended the original bill to make compliance less burdensome to industry. The goal of LD 1503 (and LD 1537) was to reduce and gradually eliminate **non-essential uses** of PFAS. As others will testify, foods prepared in PFAS pans can be a source of both chemical and microplastic exposure. Alternative cookware products with similar non-stick properties are readily available to consumers that do not contain PFAS. Thus, **LD 827** proposes to exempt a *non-essential use* that directly exposes people to these substances.

The issue regarding **LD 987** relates to which proposed exemptions are already in existing law (farm equipment) and which are, again, essential vs. non-essential uses. Competing on natural grass as an alternative to artificial turf, for example, reduces kids' exposure to PFAS and aerosolized microplastics -- and provides a surface that lowers the incidence of orthopedic injuries. In this case, the PFAS material is not only non-essential, but also inferior to the alternative. Others will testify regarding the rest of the products proposed for exclusion by this bill.

Once PFAS enters our world, it's difficult to get rid of it. The fluorine-carbon bonds that define PFAS are exceedingly stable, generating the accurate nickname of "forever chemicals." We should be following the principles outlined by previous legislatures when they passed LD 1503 & LD 1537 – and continue working on source reduction by eliminating non-essential applications. The two bills under consideration today run counter to those principles.

I urge the committee to recommend AGAINST passage of both proposals.

Sincerely,



Sydney R. Sewall, MD MPH
Hallowell
Chapter President, PSR Maine