



**Maine Medical
Association**



**TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
AND
THE MAINE OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION**

In Opposition of

LD 827 An Act to Allow the Sale of Polymer-coated Cookware That Is Authorized for Food Contact by the United States Food and Drug Administration

Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Room 216, Cross Building, Augusta, Maine
Monday, March 17th, 2025

Good Morning, Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Anne Sedlack, and I am the Director of Advocacy for the Maine Medical Association. I am here on behalf of the Maine Medical Association and Maine Osteopathic Association, testifying in opposition to LD 827, An Act to Allow the Sale of Polymer-coated Cookware That Is Authorized for Food Contact by the United States Food and Drug Administration.

The Maine Medical Association (MMA) is a professional organization representing more than 4,000 physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine. MMA's mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine, and promote the health of all Maine people. The Maine Osteopathic Association (MOA) is a professional organization representing more than 1,200 osteopathic physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine whose mission is to serve the Osteopathic profession of the State of Maine through a coordinated effort of professional education, advocacy, and member services to ensure the availability of quality osteopathic health care to the people of this State.

As trusted medical professionals, physicians help identify health risks linked to environmental factors, educate communities on these risks, and advocate for policies that support a healthier population. What affects the environment affects human health. This may be air and water pollution from fossil fuel-burning power plants and vehicle tailpipes causing lung and heart disease,¹ or increased temperatures causing heat-related illnesses and increased tick- and mosquito-borne illness.² It may manifest as extreme weather events³ or environmental toxins and plastic pollution causing cancer and endocrine disruption.⁴ We, as physicians, who are sworn to protect the health of our patients, must pay attention to the underlying causes of the illnesses we treat and stand up for policy solutions that reduce these causes.

¹ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6794003/>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/climate-health/php/effects/vectors.html>

³ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9013542/>

⁴ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9562888/>

Maine is experiencing a PFAS crisis from industrial, occupational, and everyday exposures that are contaminating our citizens and environment and threatening public health. In many cases throughout Maine, the legislature has acted to phase out PFAS. While this is a good first step in the fight against the PFAS crisis, bills such as this one will undermine this effort and slow the fight against this crisis.

Some might argue this is not an issue of public health because the bill would only provide exemptions for “polymer-coated durable item...authorized by the FDA for food contact”. Just because they are authorized by the FDA does not mean they do not present a public health risk. The FDA is far behind the states and the EU in ensuring safe food contact materials. For example, Maine banned phthalates in food packaging because of the health impacts, and the FDA still allows nine phthalates to be utilized in food packaging.

In addition to this, the Cookware industry states that their products are safe under “normal conditions.” However, many consumers don’t use them the way the industry describes as normal. The sector has guidelines like the pans should only be used up to medium heat, not be washed with abrasive cleaners, and cannot come in contact with steel utensils. Most consumers do not follow these guidelines, and many use pans in such a way that the coating flakes off, creating a much higher risk of PFAS exposure. These pans can also become an environmental concern because when disposed of, they can break down and flake off the product, turning it into microplastics and entering the environment.

As stated, PFAS is a severe public health crisis. Many studies have linked PFAS exposure to health issues, including cancer, liver damage, immune system disorders, increased cholesterol levels, and more.⁵ Thank you for considering the thoughts of Maine’s physicians, and we hope you oppose LD 827.

Thank you,

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⁵<https://www.epa.gov/pfas/our-current-understanding-human-health-and-environmental-risks-pfas#:~:text=Increased%20risk%20of%20some%20cancers,and%20For%20risk%20of%20obesity.>