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**Comments of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association  
In Support of LD 25 - *An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Fund  
Wastewater Treatment Facility Planning and Construction of Infrastructure Projects***

April 10, 2025

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Good afternoon Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. My name is Heather Spalding and I'm deputy director of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA). MOFGA supports LD 25 - *An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Fund Wastewater Treatment Facility Planning and Construction of Infrastructure Projects*. The funds provided by this bond issue, in the amount of \$50,000,000, will be used for grants to assist municipalities, quasi-municipal entities and unorganized townships with wastewater treatment facility planning and construction of infrastructure projects facilitating proper management and disposal of wastewater sludge or biosolids. We are grateful to Senator Brenner for her leadership with this bill and for all she has done to help municipalities struggling with PFAS contamination, and to protect Maine people, our environment and our farmland from PFAS-laden sludge contamination.

A broad-based community, MOFGA is transforming our food system by supporting farmers, empowering people to feed their communities, and advocating for an organic future. MOFGA certifies 537 organic farms and processing operations representing more than \$120 million in sales. We're working hard to create opportunities for Maine's next generation of farmers. Each of these farmers is a Maine businessperson for whom economic health and environmental health are interdependent. While MOFGA envisions a future of healthy ecosystems, communities, people, and economies sustained by the practices of organic agriculture, we attribute our success to collaboration and outreach to growers across the management spectrum.

MOFGA has a strong interest in this bill because, unfortunately, adhering to organic practices provides no guarantee that PFAS contamination won't impact an organic farm business. Whether organic or conventional, farms can produce contaminated crops and animal products, and farm families are vulnerable to health problems, if using drinking and irrigation water contaminated with PFAS, contaminated feed, or growing crops on soils once spread with PFAS-contaminated sludge. Since 2016, when PFAS was first found to have contaminated water, milk and soils at a Maine dairy farm, MOFGA has been on the front lines working with farmers experiencing PFAS contamination.

According to Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP) reports, as of October 30, 2024, 82 farms, both conventional and organic, have been affected by PFAS contamination, with 5 going out of business as a result, and 3 others with substantially diminished businesses. Forty-seven farms exceeded the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (MDACF) soil screening levels, and 14 farms exceeded Maine's interim drinking water standard, which is significantly higher (less conservative) than EPA's Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for PFOS and PFOA. Some exposed farm families, including organic farmers, have unimaginably high levels of PFAS in their blood.

MOFGA has expended significant staff time and financial resources helping farmers deal with the devastating consequences of PFAS contamination, including by fundraising and administering with the Maine Farmland Trust an emergency relief fund as a bridge to the State's efforts to stand up publicly funded assistance. Through this fund, financial assistance has been provided to more than 100 Maine farmers to investigate PFAS contamination risks, and to help farmers and farm workers cope with stress related to contamination.

MOFGA is also directly involved with studying the impacts of PFAS on food and farms. Caleb Goossen, Ph.D., MOFGA's organic crop and conservation specialist, was a co-author of a published peer-reviewed field study into the uptake of PFOS into mixed grasses and legumes from soil amended with sewage sludge. He is currently serving as external graduate faculty to advise PFAS-related graduate research at the University of Maine.

We are eager for Maine to secure significant funding to help address the ongoing challenge of municipal sewage sludge contaminated with PFAS and we see LD 25 as an important part of this effort. In addition to helping protect Maine's ban on land application of sewage sludge, this bill will help reduce the volume and cost of sludge that is being landfilled and will lessen the environmental impact of PFAS leaching into soils, groundwater, rivers, and coastal waters. We appreciate that the Maine Department of Environmental Protection collaborated with wastewater professionals to shape this bond and we are hopeful that this legislation will pass and add to the portfolio of essential and pioneering policy initiatives to address the PFAS crisis that is happening throughout the country.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. We encourage the Committee to support this initiative.