

April 22, 2025

LD 500

An Act to Ensure Access to Safe Drinking Water from Household Wells in Rural Areas by Expanding Testing

Chairman Ingwersen, Chairwoman Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Health and Human Services Committee my name is Melinda Kinney, and I am submitting this testimony in support of LD 500 on behalf of our Hanley Center Healthcare Leadership Program Project Group which is comprised of six health care professionals based in Maine. Our group recently graduated from the Hanley Center's Health Leadership Development class and our special project was based on the importance of testing residential well water and the significant health complications that can arise from consuming contaminated water.

Maine is known for clean water, yet in the past year there have been several concerns regarding potential contaminants in both public and private well water across various towns. While public water systems are routinely tested by local authorities, homeowners are responsible for monitoring the quality of their private wells. Notably, 52% of Mainers rely on well water, yet in 2021, only 56.1% of them conducted tests for arsenic. Alarmingly, one in ten wells in Maine contains arsenic, uranium, radon, or other harmful chemicals that exceed safety guidelines. This troubling situation highlights the critical need for vigilance regarding our water supply and emphasizes the importance of regular testing, particularly for those dependent on well water. The recommendation is to test well water annually for bacteria and every five years for arsenic, uranium, radon, and other hazardous substances.

A major concern is the lack of awareness among homeowners about the necessity of testing their well water. Many individuals may not recognize that their drinking water could be contaminated or may mistakenly believe it is safe without conducting regular tests. This oversight poses serious health risks, especially to vulnerable populations like children who are more susceptible to waterborne illnesses. Chemicals in well water, such as arsenic which is colorless, tasteless, and odorless pose risks to children's health and development. It is extremely toxic and exposure in early childhood have been associated with excess incidence of cancer in adulthood as well as neurobehavioral and neurodevelopment risks. Excessive intakes of arsenic during pregnancy have been associated with increased rates of stillbirths and other adverse outcomes.

Education about and lack of financial resources to mitigate contaminated well water are the core components of this issue. LD500 is aimed directly at the source of the problem and is desperately needed for the many residents living off well water in Maine. We urge the committee to support this important bill.

Thank you for your consideration,
Robert Porter, Abbey O'Connor, Amber Benson, Kelsey Robinson, Melinda Kinney, Stephanie Daggett