



Maine Conservation Voters

Inform. Vote. Protect.

Testimony in support of LD500, *An Act to Ensure Access to Safe Drinking Water from Household Wells in Rural Areas by Expanding Testing*

April 22, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services, my name is Cathy Breen. I am the Director of Government Affairs at Maine Conservation Voters (MCV), a statewide non-profit organization with 13,000 members and supporters that is building a just, thriving future for all by acting on the climate crisis, protecting the environment, and safeguarding our democracy. I'm speaking in support of **LD500, *An Act to Ensure Access to Safe Drinking Water from Household Wells in Rural Areas by Expanding Testing***.

Members of this committee are no doubt well aware of the health hazards posed by exposure to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in our environment. These toxic substances are so ubiquitous because they are used in everyday consumer products and manufacturing processes. PFAS pose significant health risks, including kidney cancer, reduced vaccine response, elevated cholesterol, reduced infant birthweight, and more. Like so many public health risks, low-income communities, communities of color, tribal, and rural communities are disproportionately impacted and more susceptible to health and financial impacts of PFAS contamination. Children are disproportionately exposed.

But in Maine we have the added reality that we used to encourage farmers to spread sludge - the concentrated solids that remain after municipal water treatment procedures - on their farmland to increase yield. Sadly, what this program "yielded" was contaminated soil and groundwater, rendering far too many acres of land in Maine unfit for agriculture. In addition, over 570 residential drinking water wells showed contamination above the state's interim safe drinking water standard after initial testing; and 3/4 of sludge spreading sites have yet to be investigated. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) provides free water filtration systems to households with wells contaminated over a certain threshold. Maine residents can only access that service if they know their well is contaminated, but the \$300 cost of the test is preventing some concerned Mainers from testing their wells. This bill requires a program to provide free testing for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances in household well water of low-income residents through contracts with qualified laboratories to be paid for by funds from the department's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) dedicated account. The

department is required to conduct educational outreach to make low-income residents aware of the availability of free testing of well water and eligibility for grants from the Maine State Housing Authority to pay for water treatment systems.

There is no medical treatment for removing PFAS chemicals from our bodies. Our safest course of action is to *avoid* exposure. LD500 will go a long way in helping Maine homeowners avoid consuming PFAS through their well water. I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass," and I thank you for your consideration.