

Testimony of Camille Porteous, senior at Colby College, Waterville, ME

In SUPPORT of LD 493

An Act to Expand Testing for Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances to Private Drinking Water Wells

April 22, 2025

Good morning Senator Henry Ingwersen, Representative Michele Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Camille Porteous, and I am a senior at Colby College in Waterville studying Biology and Environmental Science and planning to pursue a Master's in Public Health next year, with a focus on environmental health and justice. I am here to urge you to accept this testimony in support of LD 493: "An Act to Expand Testing for Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances to Private Drinking Water Wells," which would impose a PFAS well water testing and disclosure requirement for landlords and property sellers, LD 500: "An Act to Ensure Access to Safe Drinking Water from Household Wells in Rural Areas by Expanding Testing", which would allow for free PFAS well water testing and treatment support for low-income homeowners.

Having taken courses on pollution and public health, and researched PFAS contamination extensively, I am well aware of the severe and lasting health risks associated with these "forever chemicals." PFAS exposure has been linked to kidney cancer, immune suppression, developmental delays in infants, and a host of other serious conditions. I spent the past summer advocating for arsenic well water testing across the state and was able to witness firsthand how many Mainers are concerned and unaware about the safety of their water, especially regarding PFAS contamination. People across the state have a real desire for knowledge of and access to PFAS testing in their private wells.

Over 50% of Mainers rely on private residential wells for their drinking water yet, there is no statewide requirement to test these wells for PFAS unless contamination is already suspected. LD 493 would change that by adding PFAS to the list of substances landlords must test for, just as they currently must for arsenic. There are proven resources for remediation of PFAS in water, but remediation cannot reach its full effect without adequate testing.

PFAS testing can cost \$300 or more, and for many Mainers, that price is an insurmountable

barrier. This is especially unjust considering that many contamination events, such as sludge spreading or compost distribution, happened without the knowledge or consent of those now affected. LD 500 would help eliminate this barrier by adding PFAS to Maine's list of subsidized well water tests, which already includes contaminants like radon and arsenic. This is a small investment with enormous long-term health and economic benefits.

Maine's Department of Environmental Protection has already identified over 570 wells with PFAS levels above the state's interim safe drinking water standard. Yet, many wells that are likely contaminated around well-known sludge spreading sites remain untested, especially in rural, low-income, tribal, and BIPOC communities that are already more vulnerable to medical and financial burdens. Further, according to the Maine CDC, over 130 public water systems in Maine already have PFAS levels that exceed these proposed limits in LD 1326. That includes over 50 community water systems, 65 schools, and 12 daycare centers, water sources for more than 161,000 Mainers, including children. Without the enforceable state standards that are being proposed in LD1326, these individuals will remain at risk.

LD 493, LD 500, and LD 1326 are common-sense measures to empower renters, homeowners, and fellow citizens with life-saving information and protections. Water is a fundamental human right, and it's unjust that Mainers could unknowingly be drinking water that could cause cancer, harm their children's development, or shorten their life. I urge you to vote unanimously "Ought to Pass" on LD 493, LD 500, and LD 1326. Thank you for your time and for your commitment to protecting the health of all Mainers.

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