

April 28, 2025
Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Testimony by Nora Bosworth, Conservation Law Foundation

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 1604, An Act to Protect Groundwater and Surface Waters from Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances from Landfill Leachate

Good morning Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.

My name is Nora Bosworth and I am a Staff Attorney with the Conservation Law Foundation (“CLF”). CLF’s mission is to conserve natural resources, protect public health, and build healthy communities in Maine and throughout New England.

CLF enthusiastically **supports** LD 1604, which would enact four commonsense measures for protecting Mainers from toxic chemicals that stem from landfill leachate—the landfill liquid that accumulates in landfills, is then sent to wastewater treatment plants, and ultimately dumped into our waterways.

Landfills pollute nearby communities and the environment, posing serious health and safety hazards to the State of Maine. Landfill leachate contains PFAS, or “forever chemicals,” which are a group of nearly 15,000 synthetic chemicals that all share a carbon-fluorine bond.¹ They are called “forever chemicals” because they are practically indestructible in nature.² A growing body of science has documented that there are significant adverse health effects associated with PFAS exposure, including liver damage, thyroid disease, decreased fertility, high cholesterol, obesity, endocrine system disruption, hormone suppression, and cancer.³ Landfill leachate is collected, then either treated on-site or transported to a wastewater treatment plant (“WWTP”). While landfill leachate gets treated for some pollutants at the WWTP, **it is not being treated for PFAS before getting discharged into Maine’s waterways.** In January 2024, DEP issued a report to the legislature on the Testing of Landfill Leachate for PFAS, which stated that “it is **clear** from the 25 landfills sampled that significant concentrations of that have the potential to impact PFAS are present at landfills and in landfill leachate groundwater or surface water in the vicinity of the landfills.”⁴

¹ *Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)*, NAT’L INST. OF ENV’T HEALTH SCIS., <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/pfc#:~:text=PFAS%20are%20a%20group%20of,the%20U.S.%20Environmental%20Protection%20Agency> (last reviewed May 3, 2024).

² *NTP Monograph on Immunotoxicity Associated with Exposure to Perfluorooctanoic Acid or Perfluorooctane Sulfonate*, U.S. DEP’T OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVS. 16 (Sept. 2016), available at https://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/sites/default/files/ntp/ohat/pfoa_pfos/pfoa_pfosmonograph_508.pdf.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Report on the Testing of Landfill Leachate for Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substance Contamination*, 16 MAINE DEP’T ENV’T PROT. (Jan. 2024), available at [Report](#).

Effluent is the treated or untreated wastewater that flows from a treatment plant, sewer, or industrial outfall and is generally discharged into surface waters. Recent studies have shown that the leachate treatment at a typical WWTP that does not treat PFAS can actually create **more** PFAS in the treated effluent.⁵ So, the PFAS in the effluent discharged from a WWTP bioaccumulates and disperses into the wider environment. Once released into the environment, PFAS are extremely difficult to contain and remediate because of the strength of the carbon-fluorine bond that comprises each PFAS molecule.⁶

The State of Maine must do more to address this public health crisis, and all four aspects of LD 1604 will address these very issues:

1. **Leachate Reporting:** LD 1604 ensures that PFAS leachate disposal data is made publicly available. Maine communities value transparency, and residents have the right to know what is being released into their local rivers and environment.
2. **Discharge Limits for PFAS:** Requiring DEP to establish enforceable maximum levels for effluent disposal is a critical step to slow down this poisoning of our State's health and environment. Treating leachate or effluent for PFAS before discharge is a commonsense step to reduce contamination and protect our environment and public health. Addressing PFAS upstream is more effective and less expensive than cleaning up downstream contamination.
3. **Testing of Landfill Leachate for PFAS:** Regular testing ensures that facilities remain in compliance with discharge limits and that treatment systems are working effectively. Moreover, property owners deserve to be fully informed about potential risks to their health and to their property value.
4. **Testing of Private Water Supplies for PFAS:** Local residents have concerns about the safety of their drinking water, and early detection of PFAS contamination can prevent long-term health consequences.

Mainers deserve this bill and we urge your committee to vote ought to pass. Thank you for the opportunity to comment in **support** of LD 1604.

⁵ Nanthi Bolan, et al., *Remediation of poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contaminated soils – To mobilize or to immobilize or to degrade?*, 401 JOURNAL OF HAZARDOUS MATERIALS 123892 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhazmat.2020.123892>; Yalan Liu, et al., *From Waste Collection Vehicles to Landfills: Indication of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substance (PFAS) Transformation*, 8 ENV'T SCI. & TECH. LETTERS 66–72 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.estlett.0c00819>.

⁶ *Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)*, NAT'L INST. OF ENV'T HEALTH SCIS., <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/pfc#:~:text=PFAS%20are%20a%20group%20of,the%20U.S.%20Environmental%20Protection%20Agency> (last reviewed May 3, 2024); *PFAS Explained*, U.S. ENV'T PROT. AGENCY, <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/pfas-explained> (last updated Oct. 3, 2024); *PFAS Explained*, U.S. ENV'T PROT. AGENCY (Oct. 2023), available at <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-10/final-virtual-pfas-explainer-508.pdf>.



Respectfully submitted,

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