

Christine Foster
Brunswick
LD 1786

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Re: Support for LD 1786

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the committee,

I am writing in support of LD 1786, An Act to Require the Department of Environmental Protection to Provide Certain Information Regarding Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances to the Public and Private Drinking Water Well Owners.

I live in Brunswick where, as you know, the largest spill of toxic, PFAS-containing firefighting foam in Maine took place in August 2024 at the Brunswick Executive Airport operated by the Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority (MRRA).

It has been a very upsetting and confusing time for the community, and especially for my neighbors who have private drinking water wells at risk of contamination from this spill.

In one community meeting, I met a homeowner whose drinking water had been tested by Maine DEP after the foam spill. The water tested above US EPA limits (4 ppt), but below the less stringent Maine Interim limit (20 ppt). The homeowner indicated they received a letter from Maine DEP saying no action was recommended to remediate their water.

I was very concerned for this homeowner, since their water would actually be considered unsafe according to the US EPA limits, which were recently enacted in 2024 in light of more current science about the health risks of PFAS.

Neighbors face additional confusion because the safe limits, both federal and state, have changed over time. This was unfortunately not the first time that firefighting foam from the former Naval Air Base in Brunswick had been released into the environment. So many nearby homes had their water tested in the past, either by the Navy, Maine DEP, or both. Some of those homes “passed” water tests conducted years ago, but with levels that would actually fail today - because the limits considered “safe” are different today.

I expect by this point you have stopped reading. And that is the reason LD 1786 is so important!

Homeowners trying to get answers to basic, critical questions (Is my water safe? If not, what do I do?) have to wade through lengthy lab reports, complicated technical information, and changing and inconsistent state and federal drinking water limits.

I fear that many homeowners with contaminated water find the information too confusing, throw their hands up, and end up taking no action - even though there are available options to make their water safer.

In Brunswick, because this was unfortunately “not our first rodeo” with PFAS, we have an excellent local group (Brunswick Area Citizens for a Safe Environment) that stepped in to help educate residents. But not every community in Maine has this resource.

The talented scientists and staff at Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) could play a critical role in public communication. They do this already, to be sure, but LD 1786 would help ensure that consistent, up-to-date, and understandable information is available to well owners. Before reassuring residents that their water is safe according to current Maine “Interim” limits, Maine DEP should provide the important context about the more stringent US EPA limits enacted in 2024.

Knowing the options for testing and remediating drinking water will allow water well owners throughout Maine to take action to avoid the health risks of PFAS.

I urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1786 so Maine residents can be better informed about how to ensure safe drinking water.

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