

## **Testimony of Lani Graham, MD, MPH**

### **In Support of LD 1870 & LD 1808**

#### **An Act to Establish a Climate Superfund Cost Recovery Program to Impose Penalties on Climate Polluters (LD 1870)**

**&**

#### **An Act to Enact the Maine Climate Superfund Act (LD 1808)**

**Presented by Senator Brenner (LD 1870) & Rep. Lookner (LD 1808)**

**Before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, May 5, 2025**

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Lani Graham I am a former Chief Public health Officer for Maine, and I live in Freeport. As a physician and in consultation with the Co-Chairs of the Maine Medical Association's (MMA) Public Health Committee (PHC), we are in support of LD's 1870 & 1808.

The Maine Medical Association (MMA), largely led by PHC interest, has a long history of concern about climate change and its implications for the health of Maine people dating back at least 15 years. In fact, the Co-Chairs of the PHC recently submitted an Opinion Article to the Bangor Daily News on this very subject last month. In that opinion piece, a 2009 article from The Lancet was quoted as noting: "Climate change is the biggest global health threat of the 21st century."<sup>1</sup> We believe that Maine is no exception to this threat.

It is important for the committee to understand that the health of Maine people is, even now, being adversely affected by the continuing use of fossil fuels, which account for over 75% of global greenhouse gases.<sup>2</sup> Asthma in children, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease in adults, and cardiovascular disease are all worsened by air pollution right now in Maine. But of course, air pollution is not the only problem associated with fossil fuels affecting Maine people. The health effects of fossil fuels are far-reaching. Fossil fuels are used to produce plastics and other petrochemicals, which release harmful toxins and microplastics into the environment.<sup>3</sup> Research into these effects is on-going, but microplastics have already been documented in the human lung, in breast milk, in human blood, in the human brain and in many other organs.<sup>4</sup> What this means for human health has not been fully investigated, but it seems unlikely that having microplastics in your organs will turn out to be good for your health.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(09\)60935-1/abstract](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(09)60935-1/abstract)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/causes-effects-climate-change#:~:text=Fossil%20fuels%20-%20coal%2C%20oil%20and,they%20trap%20the%20sun>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0013935121000487?via%3DiHub>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/microplastics-human-bodies-health-risks#:~:text=In%20recent%20years%2C%20microplastics%20have,absorbed%20into%20the%20human%20bloodstream.>

And this brings me to additional future impacts which includes all of that and more—new diseases from other climates, extreme weather events, and displacements of people.

Almost always large corporations prefer not to pay their fair share of the consequences of the use of various substances. They prefer to reap profits and let the affected people, who, to be fair, have also enjoyed the benefits of the use, pay for adverse consequences.

These two bills represent fair and relatively modest approaches to requiring corporations who contributed significantly to greenhouse gas pollution, specifically in Maine, during a limited decade, to help Mainers respond to the adverse effects. The bills are very similar and both good. We hope it will be the committee's work to decide which approach is best or a combination of the two.

Thank you for your attention.