

PSR Maine

Physicians for Social Responsibility Maine Chapter

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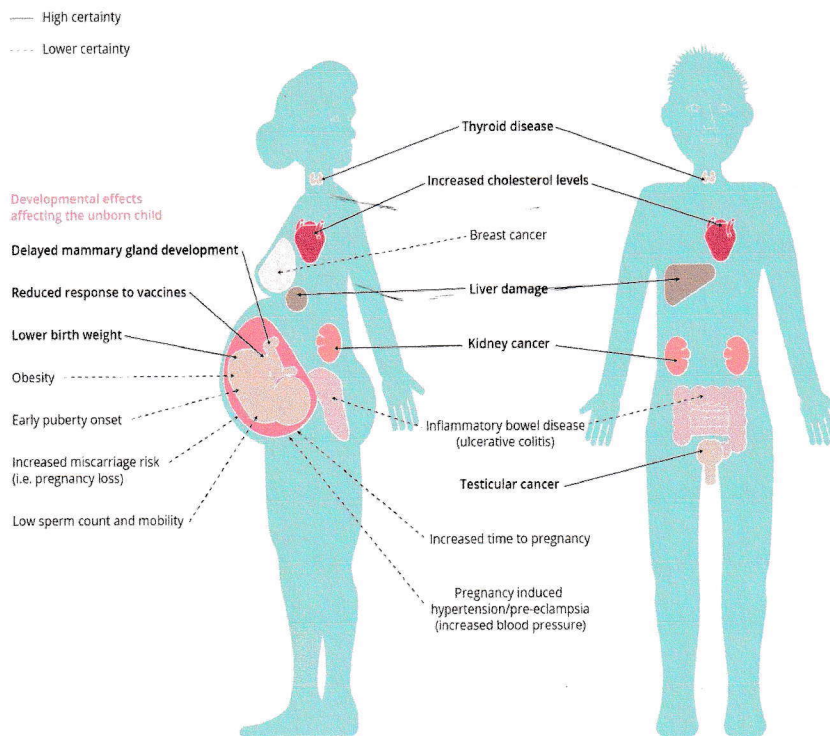
Testimony in opposition to LD 1903 by Sydney R. Sewall, MD (Hallowell)

Sen. Tepler, Rep. Doudera and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

I am a pediatrician who has practiced in the Central Maine area since 1982, and have observed the increasing prevalence of developmental disorders, obesity, and other chronic diseases in our youth over my decades of practice. While the cause of this trend is multifactorial, chemical exposures are likely contributory. I am currently an officer of **PSR Maine**, a group of 300 medical professionals concerned with public health threats.

Some of you may recall the 2007 biomonitoring study titled **Body of Evidence** when it was distributed to all the members of the legislature. Thirteen Maine citizens (including a state representative) had their body fluids tested for 71 different chemicals and were surprised to find that they ALL had some toxins in their bodies – with an average of 36 different substances present in each subject. This was prior to the recognition of widespread PFAS contamination, and these compounds were not on the list. If we repeated the study today, we would find PFAS in every volunteer.

You are all aware of the fact that the accumulating data on health effects of PFAS exposure has led to lowering the acceptable limits in public water sources. Studies show associations with a variety of diseases:



European Environmental Agency 2019

While Maine was somewhat of a pioneer in 2021 with the passage of LD 1503, we are no longer alone in our attempts to keep citizens safe from PFAS products that contact food – CO, MN, CT, VT and RI also have bans. Over the next two years, the legislature adjusted the original bill to give some relief to industry, but the goal remained -- to reduce and gradually eliminate **non-essential uses** of PFAS. Food prepared in PFAS pans or packaged in PFAS containing wrapping material can be sources of both chemical and microplastic exposure and alternatives are available. Thus, **LD 1903** proposes to exempt *non-essential uses* that directly expose people to these substances, contradicting the intent of the legislature.

This bill also proposes having Federal regulations supersede state rules regarding soil and water contamination with PFAS -- in spite of the fact that it is the stated policy of the current administration in D.C. to dismantle environmental regulations and eliminate most enforcement. Federal rule makers are unlikely to include science and public health in their calculations.

Once PFAS enters our world, it's difficult to get rid of it. The fluorine-carbon bonds that define PFAS are exceedingly stable, generating the accurate nickname of "forever chemicals." We should be following the principles outlined by previous legislatures – and continue working on source reduction by eliminating non-essential applications.

I urge the committee to recommend AGAINST LD 1903.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sydney R. Sewall", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sydney R. Sewall, MD MPH
Hallowell
Chapter President, PSR Maine