

Testimony for L.D. 500: An Act to Ensure Access to Safe Drinking Water from Household Wells in Rural Areas by Expanding Testing

Representatives, Senators, and members of the committee, I am Samantha Stoner, an 8th grade student at Orono Middle School. I wrote this testimony in support of L.D. 500: An Act to Ensure Access to Safe Drinking Water from Household Wells in Rural Areas by Expanding Testing.

I personally care about this bill because I am surrounded by people who use private wells, including myself. Several neighbors of mine in Orono got their water contaminated with harmful chemicals, and it was costly to fix. This contamination could have been prevented with a simple water test. A decent water test is only a fraction of the cost before the contamination and the price gets worse. Luckily, they could pay for the alterations. But, a low-income resident? These damages to a private well could leave residents in debt, or having to avoid using the water. Avoiding the water and buying water from the store is not a good long term solution, as stated by [a 2025 Maine Government Report on Water Quality](#), “Tap water in New England, including in Maine, tends to average at about \$0.01/gallon. A 16.9 fl. oz bottle of water in Maine, purchased at the store, costs \$1.45 on average. That’s equal to \$10.98 per gallon, almost 1,100 times the price at the tap.” If this continued for a long time, low-income residents could be in real trouble financially.

Water is used on the daily for countless basic tasks. Washing dishes, flushing toilets, drinking, hygiene purposes, I could go on forever. According to [United Nations Water](#), it is a *basic human right* to have access to clean and affordable water, because it is a necessity to survive. However, “physical presence of water is not the same as access to water.” Right now, most people in Maine have access to water, but access to clean water? As stated by [The Town Office of Bar Harbor, Maine](#), “1 in 10 wells in Maine have too much arsenic, uranium, radon, or other harmful chemicals.” A lot of these substances can wreak havoc on the human body, causing cancerous diseases and sicknesses. If these sicknesses progress, they can cause financial distress for the sick, especially for low-income residents who cannot pay for treatment/hospital bills. If we can prevent this early on, we can save lives and money for low income residents of Maine.

For many low-income residents, their main goal in life is survival. They don’t have the proper finances to spend their money on many other things. According to [a 2025 Maine Government Report on Water Quality](#), “households at 75% of the federal poverty level spend up to 40% of their monthly income on water and sewer bills.” That’s a lot of money. Although that data is about water bills in general; not just private well invoices, 55% of Maine residents use private wells as their water source, as reported by [Maine Public Health](#). Low-income residents still have to worry about food, rent/mortgage, transportation, and so much more. Any stress we can relieve off of low-income residents can play a huge part in helping them live happier, more financially stable lives. Passing this bill would be a crucial step in helping that become a reality.

For low-income residents, testing their wells for pollutants isn't what's on their mind, or in their budget. According to [Maine Gov. Private Water Testing Kits](#), efficient water tests can cost up to \$127. That kind of money isn't an option to spend for many low-income residents.

Maine could also take notes from states who have passed similar bills to help out, like California, who used an application system so residents can apply for financial support (see more at [California CSD](#)).

Let's do everything we can to help out our community, especially those in need.

I appreciate you listening to my testimony. Thank you for your careful consideration.