



Henry L. Ingwersen  
Senator, District 32

**THE MAINE SENATE**  
131st Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

Good Morning, Representative Pluecker and Esteemed Members of the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee. I'm Senator Henry Ingwersen, representing the towns of Arundel, Biddeford, Dayton, Hollis, and Lyman. I'm before you this morning to testify in Support of LD 289 "An Act to Require the State to Purchase Farms Contaminated with Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances."

Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, more commonly known as PFAS, are called "forever chemicals" because they don't break down and remain in our body and in the environment for years. These chemicals are hazardous to human health and have been linked to decreased immune system function and decreased vaccine efficacy. There are many sources of these very common chemical compounds, but the source that is the cause of farmland contamination is municipal sewage and industrial sludge that was sanctioned by the state and applied for consecutive years as a very expensive and effective fertilizer. The state and farmers were unaware that this sludge contained PFAS that was accumulating in these soils.

As this committee is aware of, there are in excess of 50 farms and hundreds of wells statewide that have so far been found to be contaminated by PFAS, and many hundreds more permitted land application sites that require testing to see if they are also contaminated. Generations-old farms have been destroyed, livelihoods have been lost, and human health has been severely impacted. Stoneridge Dairy Farms is less than 2 miles down the road from my house in Arundel, and I can personally attest to the many heartaches and continuing losses that Fred and Laura Stone have suffered since first discovering and then publicly disclosing PFAS contamination at their farm in 2016.

While I believe the true culprits in this situation are the chemical companies who knew the human health dangers of PFAS long before they were spread on our farms, I do believe the state, who authorized the sludge spreading, has a responsibility to help our citizens in their time of need. They have embarked on this difficult task.

Last year, the Mills Administration allocated \$60 million dollars to help farmers affected by PFAS with income replacement, farm buybacks, and medical monitoring and research, among other things. This fund also created an advisory committee made up of impacted farmers, legislators, and others, who will decide how these funds will be distributed. They have recently begun their work and told this committee that they should be ready to begin distributing those funds this summer. This distribution is urgently needed for impacted farmers, some who lost their livelihoods many years ago.

Though I support this bill, I do, however, have some concerns about how it is currently drafted:



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- This bill creates a special section, separate from the work of the advisory committee, that mandates that the state offer to purchase PFAS-impacted farms found to be contaminated prior to January of 2023. This separate special clause leaves out the many farms that are likely to be found to be contaminated in the future and has no mandated compensation for them. This seems unfair to me, though I have no suggestions. Only that I assume the rationale behind an advisory committee is to ensure fair distribution of funds.
- I do not think that this bill should include a per acre price tag for reimbursement for a couple of reasons. Not only does this amount seem arbitrarily high compared to the state-and nationwide averages for farmland, but a set, \$20,000 minimum price tag could soon become untenable for the state as it faces the likely prospect of more impacted farms, wells, and individuals.
- A final amendment I would recommend would be for the bill to clearly define and offer emergency compensation for farmers who are waiting for funds to be distributed. There are producers who have been out of business for many years and I'm not sure if they are receiving emergency relief funds in the interim.

Thank you.