



Solutions for a  
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Director of Advocacy, Defend Our Health  
In SUPPORT of LD 258, "An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the  
General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing  
Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the  
Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025"  
Before the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee  
February 16, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs and members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the director of advocacy for Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health works to make sure everyone has equal access to safe food, safe drinking water, healthy homes and toxic-free, climate-friendly products. I am here to testify in support to LD 258, "An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024, and June 30, 2025".

LD 258 includes funding for the Department of Environmental Protection's solid waste management fund for ongoing costs associated with PFAS contamination. There is also a request for funding to make 6 staff positions that are currently short term into full time positions.

Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are more commonly known as PFAS. PFAS are called "forever chemicals" meaning 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. PFAS also increase the risk of some cancers, may lower a woman's chance of getting pregnant, and have been associated with liver problems and increased cholesterol levels. These toxic chemicals can enter the environment and drinking water supply through a variety of sources including firefighting foam, sewer and industrial sludge spread on local farmland, and our food packaging and other products with leak-proof and grease-proof coatings.

Maine is currently in the midst of a PFAS contamination crisis. You have all heard the story of contaminated farmland across the state which has been destroyed due to PFAS contamination because of state-sanctioned spreading of industrial and municipal sludge on farmland. A recent briefing by the DEP before the Board of Environmental Protection stated that 22% of the wells that the DEP has tested so far for PFAS have tested above the state screening standard of 20 PPT and there are currently over 50 farms dealing with contamination issues.

In recent years the state has devoted considerable resources to the issue of PFAS contamination and we are grateful to the legislature and the Governor for supporting this funding. And while we are heartened to see more resources being directed to this issue across departments, it is sadly not enough. Particularly as we look at the issue of source reduction. Maine passed a first in the world piece of legislation that will phase out all non-essential uses of PFAS in the state by 2030. Source reduction is the single most important thing we can do to combat further contamination. Yet, the safer chemicals program under the Department of



Environmental Protection is woefully understaffed. There are currently 2 staff people assigned to program. To put it into perspective, Washington state has 20 staff members working in their safer chemicals program. We recognize that Washington state is larger population wise than Maine. However, they do not have a massive PFAS source reduction program to implement that impacts industry across the globe. We urge the committee to fully fund the current PFAS funding requests by the Governor but, additionally, we urge the committee to utilize any additional funding available for additional staff for the DEP's safer chemicals program to assure that PFAS source reduction programs are implemented correctly and in a timely manner to help prevent further contamination across the state.

Defend Our Health urges you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 258 to provide the resources necessary to keep our communities safe and healthy.

Thank you for your time.