



Solutions for a
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony In Support of LD 993, "An Act to Facilitate Stakeholder Input Regarding Forest Policy in Maine" Before the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee
March 20, 2023

Good morning, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Pluecker and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, and Conservation. My name is Sarah Woodbury, and I am the director of advocacy for Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health is a Maine-based non-profit that works to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food, safe drinking water, healthy homes, and toxic-free, climate-friendly products. Please accept this testimony on behalf of Defend Our Health in support of LD 993, "An Act to Facilitate Stakeholder Input Regarding Forest Policy in Maine".

LD 993 would create a forest advisory board. This board could help bring together a variety of individuals with different viewpoints such as landowners, tribal communities, ecologists, and sportsmen and women that have a stake in and care about the management of Maine's forests. It would provide a venue to share information, facilitate public input, look at the forest holistically, and advise the Maine Forest Service on policies to keep our forests healthy.

If our forests are sustainably managed, they can be utilized to help us fight climate change by moving away from petrochemicals. Forest waste can be used to create biobased materials that can take the place of toxic plastics. We can convert woody biomass, such as the slash and sawdust leftover from logging and sawmill operations, into renewable chemicals. These forest bioproducts can replace petrochemicals as ingredients in everyday household products and building materials. A forest advisory board could help to make sure Maine's forests are managed correctly so we can utilize our forest's resources to help fight both PFAS and climate change while at the same time making sure that they aren't overharvested, and we don't lose vital ecosystems. Additionally, the state needs to make sure it has systems in place, such as an advisory board, to help protect Maine's forests from PFAS contamination. As more information comes out about PFAS leaching from containers¹ into pesticides² that are used for a variety of forest management practices, it's important to have a venue to discuss these issues and come up with best practices to both manage the forest and protect public health.

¹ Environmental Protection Agency. (2021, March 5). *EPA Releases Testing Data Showing PFAS Contamination from Fluorinated Containers*. EPA. Retrieved March 19, 2023, from <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-releases-testing-data-showing-pfas-contamination-fluorinated-containers>

² Abel, D. (2020, December 2). *Toxic 'forever chemicals' found in pesticide used on millions of Mass. Acres when spraying for mosquitoes - the Boston Globe*. BostonGlobe.com. Retrieved March 19, 2023, from <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/12/01/metro/toxic-forever-chemicals-found-pesticide-used-millions-mass-acres-when-spraying-mosquitoes>



Fifteen other states have forest advisory boards and Maine also has a variety of other advisory boards that help manage Maine's other natural resources. Maine forests provide numerous benefits to our state, and we need to make sure we are doing everything to make sure that they will be around for future generations. Therefore we urge the committee to unanimously vote "ought to pass" on LD 993.

Thank you.