



Stacy Brenner
Senator, District 30

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Stacy Brenner to introduce LD 132, “An Act to Require Health Insurance Carriers to Provide Coverage for Blood Testing for Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
March 28, 2023

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and Distinguished Colleagues on the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, my name is Stacy Brenner. I represent Senate District 30, which includes all of Gorham and most of Scarborough. I am here to speak in favor of LD 132, “An Act to Require Health Insurance Carriers to Provide Coverage for Blood Testing for Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances.”

This legislation would ensure that health insurance carriers provide coverage for blood serum testing for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, also known as PFAS. This bill stipulates that all plans renewed or beginning on January 1, 2024 would include coverage for blood serum testing of PFAS.

Toxic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) or “forever chemicals” accumulates in our wastewater and contaminates the land and groundwater due to manufacturing processes, sludge applied to farmland, and the thousands of everyday products containing PFAS. Forever chemicals pose significant health risks, including kidney cancer, reduced vaccine response, elevated cholesterol, reduced infant birthweight, and more. Low income communities, communities of color, tribal, and rural communities are disproportionately impacted and more susceptible to health and financial impacts of PFAS contamination. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children are disproportionately exposed due to “...lower body weight, differences in water and food intake, developing organ systems and longer lifespans during which toxic effects might manifest”¹.

Treatment for PFAS exposure is centered around assessing the patient’s level of exposure. High level exposure triggers regular screening to allow for early detection of linked diseases. There is no approved procedure to remove the chemicals from an exposed person’s body, and the chemicals linger in the blood and organs for decades. The assessment of personal exposure can help impacted families understand the risks and prevent additional future exposure.

The National Academy of Sciences Engineering and Medicine recommends PFAS blood serum tests for at-risk populations including communities with documented exposure, people living near

¹ *Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)*. American Academy of Pediatrics. (2023, February 2). Retrieved March 26, 2023, from <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/environmental-health/promoting-healthy-environments-for-children/perfluoroalkyl-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances/>



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farms where sludge may have been spread, people with an occupational exposure risk including firefighters & people living near landfills, incinerators, airports, and military bases.

Many private Maine insurers leave patients to cover the full cost of the blood serum test unless the deductible has been reached. The average \$600 per person cost of the serum test is currently preventing PFAS impacted Mainers from assessing their exposure. The Affordable Care Act mandates that insurers must cover the full cost of a list of 10 essential health care benefits including lab tests and preventative health care procedures. The PFAS blood serum test is both a lab test and a preventative health care procedure, since it allows patients to understand and mediate their exposure and screen for linked diseases.

At least 25 Maine schools and daycare facilities have water supplies above Maine's interim drinking water standard of 20 parts per trillion, suggesting that 6,650 children and young adults currently enrolled at those schools have been exposed to high levels of PFAS while at school. There are 43 impacted schools and a total of 9,550 children exposed above EPA's draft drinking water standards, which are lower than Maine's regulation. Maine DHHS is awaiting data on an additional 99 schools, and the number of exposed students is likely much higher. The total number of previously exposed alumni from these impacted schools would be hard to calculate.

Maine has identified at least 56 farms with documented PFAS contamination and over 380 private drinking wells in 22 Maine towns contaminated above the state's interim safe drinking water standard in the first tier of its sludge investigation. The state will likely discover more highly contaminated private wells as the investigation continues.

As chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and co-chair of the PFAS Advisory Fund Committee, I have heard first hand how the issue of PFAS contamination has taken a toll on our farmers and other rural communities with high levels of exposure. They are worried about their health and the health of their families. We need to do all we can to make sure that they are getting the healthcare that they need to manage the health impacts of this toxic chemical. Early detection of PFAS-linked diseases could mean the difference between life and death for many Mainers. For affected communities, especially children, access to PFAS blood serum testing is essential to their medical needs. Mainers coping with these chemicals need insurer-covered access to the PFAS blood serum test.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.