



David LaFountain
Senator, District 16

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

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Testimony of Senator Dave LaFountain in support of
**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 at 1:00 pm

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry and honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, my name is Dave LaFountain. I have the honor of representing the good people in Senate District 16, including Albion, Fairfield, Oakland, Waterville, and my hometown of Winslow. Today, I am here to testify in support of Senator Brenner's bill, LD 132, An Act to Require Health Insurance Carriers to Provide Coverage for Blood Testing for Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances

Fairfield, Maine is unfortunately a hotspot of high levels of PFAS contaminants, threatening the quality of food, water, and life in an otherwise peaceful community. I've had constituents from Fairfield reach out, wondering what can be done to mitigate the effects from the hazardous practice of spreading contaminated sludge and waste on our farmlands.

In addition to working with the state to identify and execute clean-up efforts, this move to require insurance companies to cover the cost of blood testing for PFAS is key to a holistic cleanup effort. The cost barrier is great, with price tags ranging from \$400-600, is simply not affordable for most families in the area. The need for private insurance policies to cover this testing is great, and it crosses party lines.

In addition to the spreading of contaminated sludge, there is grave concern that our firefighters have been performing their duties in contaminated gear. The chemicals are used in the gear to withstand very high temperatures. According to the International Association of Fire Fighting, PFAS "forever chemicals" are found in firefighter protective gear and have been linked to cancer, the leading cause of fire fighter death. Requiring these tests to be covered by insurance for our brave first responders is a step we must take since we can never repay their sacrifice.

Showing our ranks that we have their back, and ensuring adequate staffing as we face a decline in hiring and retention is essential to the critical services Fire Departments across Maine provide. This test is necessary for effective medical care. I have dedicated my career to public safety, and this is a matter of public safety. These tests will allow families, seniors, and first responders to get answers they deserve.

I am grateful for Senator Brenner sponsoring this bill, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to get this bill across the finish line. I'm happy to answer any questions the committee may have, to the best of my ability.