

Testimony of Lani Graham, MD, MPH
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IN SUPPORT OF LD 1006

An Act to Ensure Access to Safe Drinking Water from Household Wells in Rural Areas by Expanding Testing

Presented by Representative Pluecker of Warren

Before Health and Human Services Committee:

Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Committee. My name is Lani Graham. I am a family practice physician. I served on the Governor's task force to consider Maine's approach to dealing with the chemical family known as PFAS (perfluoroalkyl substances) which completed its work in 2019. Currently, I serve on the Public Health Committee for the Maine Medical Association (MMA) and I am here in support of this bill on behalf of the Maine Medical Association.

Over the last few years, I have been very involved in helping to address the contamination of Maine by PFAS. And indeed, this is a very serious problem that we are learning more about every day. I can tell you from extensive experience, that once a chemical is found to be dangerous to human health, the news never gets better as more research is done. At present we are aware of quite an array of adverse human health effects. This is likely the "tip of the iceberg". I expect more adverse human health effects will be revealed as scientific research study continues.

As you have heard, people on public water supplies do not need to worry as public water supplies must conform to strict safety standards. But the rural nature of this state has led to the fact that more than 50% of Maine people are not on public water and instead get their water from residential wells. That is the highest in the country. For these people, including myself, unless a decision is made to test your well water, you may not know of the contamination.

I will add here that the definition of rural is variable. In Freeport I live within 5 miles of two public water supplies, and within 20 miles of Portland, but have my own well.

In my case I have had my well water tested for many different contaminants, and found some that have required mitigation. Fortunately, I had the resources to make this testing and remediation possible. My one family effort cost well over \$5000, including mitigation. Many cannot afford such expenditures and would instead be relegated to turning a blind eye to the possible contamination of their drinking water. Access to safe drinking water should not depend on your income. Safe drinking water is the very essence of public health. But in Maine safe drinking water **does** depend on income and as a result low-income communities, rural Mainers, communities of color are disproportionately affected.

I urge this committee to support funding for safe drinking water for Maine families. Thank you for your attention. I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.