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Maine Community Action Partnership Supports LD 1006 An Act to Ensure Access to Healthy Drinking Water from Household Wells in Rural Maine

April 28, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Megan Hannan, Executive Director of the Maine Community Action Partnership, the membership organization of the ten Community Action Agencies in Maine, and we support LD 1006 An Act to Ensure Access to Healthy Drinking Water from Household Wells in Rural Maine.

Our state's greatest resource is our people, and our state's policies shape people's possibilities. In Community Action, we create conditions that invite children to learn and adults to apply their skills, tapping into the hidden potential in our communities. Through our Whole Family approach, we build a family's capacity for sustained stability and economic growth. We invest in the family's well-being, we let them drive their own story, and we have tangible success.

As these families fulfill their promise, they can run into unintended consequences of policies enacted in good faith, before we learned more about what we were using to produce everyday products and to reuse products as a solution to another problem. This has happened many times in our recent history: widely used lead paint; carcinogens in gasoline, cigarettes and even some preserved foods; and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in sludge used to fertilize home gardens and farms. In each case, we did what we thought was best at the time.

Times change, we know more about these chemicals and their harmful effects. While we still use gasoline every day, we are using less and less; we do not smoke tobacco in public places. In the case of PFAS, we cannot see it or smell it, but tested water shows it in over 380 residential drinking water wells in 22 Maine towns near known contamination sites; and 25 Maine schools, impacting up to 6,650 children, from unknown sites. That means on the order of nearly 10,000 people, that we know of, including many children, are being poisoned every time they have a drink of what should be life affirming water.

The cost to test your well for PFAS, if you even think about it, is about \$300. If you are near a known sludge spreading site, as those 380 households were, you may be entitled to a free water filtration system from the DEP; if not, you are on your own to try to remediate the problem.

LD 1006 seeks to remedy this for low-income Mainers, who do not have the means to test, let alone treat, their potentially contaminated wells. This simply adds PFAS to the list of contaminants for which DHHS already tests. If you find PFAS or other contaminants in your water, there is funding available from the Maine Housing Authority to help cover the cost of remediation.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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