

Testimony of Kelsey George, resident of Carmel, In SUPPORT of LD 1006
“An Act to Ensure Access to Healthy Drinking Water from Household Wells in Rural Maine”
Before the Health and Human Services Committee
April 28, 2023

Greetings Senator Baldacci and Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Kelsey George, I have been a Maine resident for 15 years, and I serve as a policy board member for the nonprofit organization “Defend Our Health”. As a Maine resident whose health was irreversibly impacted by drinking arsenic contaminated well water, I support LD 1006, to ensure access to healthy drinking water from household wells in rural areas by expanding testing.

First developed in the 1940s, PFAS are a large group of more than 9,000 synthetic chemicals. Commonly known as “forever chemicals” their properties make them water and oil-repellent and highly resistant to chemical and thermal breakdown.^{1 2}

PFAS are used in many different industry and consumer products, including stain-resistant textiles, food-handling materials, firefighting foam, medical devices, paints, personal care products, and construction materials to name a few.³

Due to their persistence in the environment, PFAS chemicals have steadily accumulated in drinking water sources and oceans worldwide⁴. This can happen as contaminated water from landfills, factories, and toxic sludge sprayed on farmland seeps into groundwater.

PFAS pose significant health risks, including kidney cancer, elevated cholesterol, reduced vaccine response, reduced infant birth weight, and more.

Let me share my story. In 2009, I rented a property in Hancock County Maine that was contaminated with arsenic in the well water. While the landlords *knew* their well contained levels of arsenic over the federal limit of 10ppb and didn’t drink their own well water, they never disclosed this information on the lease agreement because there was no law at that time requiring them to do so. My health suffered as a result – which has had lasting and permanent impacts. Thanks to many of you, LD 1570 was enacted in July 2021 requiring the testing and disclosure of arsenic in well water. Subsequently, LD 1891 was enacted to replenish funding for low-income Mainers to help remediate contaminated wells.

Unlike arsenic toxicity which can be detoxed from the physical body through chelation therapy and other natural methods, there are no approved medical procedures to remove PFAS chemicals from a person’s body, and they can linger in the blood and organs for decades.

Low income communities, communities of color, tribal, and rural communities, as well as children are disproportionately impacted and more susceptible to health and financial impacts of PFAS contamination.

Maine DEP’s initial investigation of licensed sludge spreading sites has identified over 380 residential drinking wells in 22 Maine towns contaminated above the state’s interim safe drinking water standard

¹ <https://comptox.epa.gov/dashboard/chemical-lists/pfasmaster>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/pfas/default.html>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/pfas/default.html>

⁴ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41370-018-0094-1>

of 20 parts per trillion. But three (3) of four (4) groups of sludge spreading sites remain to be investigated.

We can assume there are additional impacted drinking water wells that remain to be identified. We need to ensure that everyone has access to clean drinking water – including low income Mainers.

Preventing toxic exposure is always cheaper than cost of medical care for patients dealing with PFAS linked illnesses. I encourage the committee to add the PFAS test to its existing list of subsidized water tests, like radon and arsenic.

I support LD 1006. Thank you.