

Testimony of Adam Nordell, Defend Our Health, Portland
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 28th, 2023

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Adam Nordell. I am a campaign manager for Defend Our Health, and the co-owner of Songbird Farm in Unity. I submit this testimony in support of LD 1006.

My family spent seven years drinking water that was contaminated with PFAS about 400 times beyond Maine’s interim drinking water standard of 20 parts per trillion. This has resulted high level personal exposure to the chemicals. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine recently released a review of PFAS exposure studies, and concluded that people with a blood serum level over 20 parts per billion face an elevated risk of a host of diseases, including kidney cancer, breast cancer, testicular cancer, liver disease and thyroid disorders. After seven years drinking the water on my farm, my blood tested around 3,500 parts per billion for a sum of six PFAS – this is 175 times the National Academies’ elevated risk threshold. The chemicals take decades to leave the human body.

Knowing that the chemicals are present in our water allowed my wife and I to pursue the instillation of a water filter and make lifestyle changes to avoid accumulating even high levels of these toxic chemicals in our bodies. The clinical guidance for PFAS exposed patients is to stop exposure and monitor for linked illnesses. But we can only do that if we know that we have been exposed. The man who sold me my farm drank that water for 25 years and then, in his 60s, died of a fast-acting PFAS-linked cancer. He didn’t know there was a problem with his water. Knowledge is power.

Maine DEP is investigating historically sludge spread sites and installing filters when they find a highly contaminated well. So far, almost one out of every four wells tested has required filtration. There are significant gaps in DEP’s investigation that leave many Mainers vulnerable to continued, unknown PFAS exposure. Maine has records of where sludge was spread, but not where sludge-based compost was spread, like that historically sold by Casella and Soil Preparations Inc. There is no reason to think that those locations are any less impacted that spots spread with non-composted sludge. But DEP doesn’t don’t know where they are.

In the past year at least 25 schools have identified unsafe drinking water, some of which have tested very high – 40 times over the drinking water standard. Those schools are unlikely to be adjacent to sludge-spread farms, which begs the question – how many other private drinking water wells remain unidentified and off of DEP’s radar?

We already offer a subsidy to help low income Mainers access a test for radon and arsenic. Adding PFAS to that list would be a common-sense public health measure. Knowing that these chemicals are present in your drinking water and having the opportunity to install a filter can make an enormous difference in a person’s long-term health

I urge you to vote ‘ought to pass’ on LD 1006. Thank you

Adam Nordell
Defend Our Health