Testimony of Kelsey George, resident of Carmel, In SUPPORT of LD 1488
"An Act Concerning Testing for and Disclosure of PFAS Contamination
of Residential Drinking Water Wells"
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 1488, regarding the testing and disclosure of PFAS contamination in residential well water.

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 included in products we use every day, from non-stick frying pans, waterproof rain jackets, flame-retardant sofas, food packaging, and makeup, just to name a few.

But PFAS can persist in the environment for hundreds or thousands of years. Research estimates that it takes more than 1,000 years on average for the chemical concentration of some PFAS to reduce by 50% in soil.[3]

Due to their persistence, PFAS chemicals have steadily accumulated in drinking water sources and oceans worldwide[4]. This can happen as contaminated water from landfills, factories, and toxic sludge seeps into groundwater. PFAS in household items can also be washed into rivers and oceans through sewage systems.

In 2019, at least one PFAS was detected in 60% of the public groundwater wells and 20% of the private groundwater wells used as drinking water sources in the eastern U.S.[5]

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

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.

In Maine, more than 50% of residents get their drinking water from residential wells. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of housing in Maine is rented, and nearly one-third of renters (29%) are serviced by a residential well.

---

[1] https://comptox.epa.gov/dashboard/chemical-lists/pfasmaster
[2] https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/pfas/default.html
[3] https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/es0710499
[4] https://www.nature.com/articles/s41370-018-0094-1
[5] https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.1c04795

Similar to arsenic, humans cannot see, smell or taste PFAS in drinking water.[6] **This is why it is imperative we test.**

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. But we're not out of the woods yet.

Tenants and future homeowners have a right to know what's in their drinking water so they can protect themselves and their families from exposure to *any* contaminants in the water they drink.

LD 1488 adds PFAS and other contaminants such as lead, radon, and uranium to the list of contaminants that the landlord must test for and provide those results to tenants within 10 days of notification of the results.

I urge you to vote in support of LD 1488. Thank you.

[6] https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/pfas-toxic-forever-chemicals-drinking-water/