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Testimony of Representative Vicki Doudera presenting
LD 2044: An Act to Update Air Quality Health Warnings
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Good day Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Vicki Doudera and I represent House District 41, the towns of Camden and Rockport. I am before you today to present **LD 2044, An Act to Update Air Quality Health Warnings**, on behalf of the Department of Environmental Protection's Bureau of Air Quality.

In 1995, the Maine Legislature enacted *LD 258, An Act to Change the State's Air Quality Standard for Ozone to the Federal Standard*, which aligned Maine's ozone standard to that of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The language currently codified in Maine Statute, 38 M.R.S. §584-F provides for three items:

1. That Maine's ambient air quality ozone standard be aligned with the EPA's standard of 80 parts per billion;
2. That when the level of ozone exceeds or is anticipated to exceed 80 parts per billion, the Department is directed to issue a health warning to the mass media; and
3. That the Department establish, operate and maintain a toll-free telephone hotline where members of the public can call in to hear a prerecorded daily message.

The rulemaking proposal that I present today provides necessary updates for all three of these items. First, the specific ambient air quality value of 80 parts per billion would

be removed, and instead, aligned with EPA's current ambient air quality standard, the Air Quality Index (AQI). Second, the proposal requires the Department to disseminate a health warning to the mass media when ambient air concentration of a pollutant reaches the EPA's AQI category of "Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups" or a higher category. Finally, this proposal offers updated language as to how the Department disseminates a health warning to the public. Some of us may remember 1995 when the language for this statute was written. That was the year DVDs were invented, the first Sony PlayStation was released, the Macarena debuted and Forbes Magazine named Bill Gates the richest man in the world.

Much has changed since 1995 – Bill Gates is now the 7th richest person in the world – and changes in the ways we send and receive information have exploded since that time. This proposal recognizes that the old requirements for the Department to specifically notify "television, radio and print media" are outdated. They have been broadened to include "the most appropriate technology available," such as the Department of Environmental Protection's website, news websites and social media.

Before I close, let me give a brief explanation of the Air Quality Index. The EPA establishes an AQI for five major air pollutants regulated by the Clean Air Act. Each of these pollutants has a national air quality standard set by EPA to protect public health. They are: ground level ozone, particle pollution, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide. I have included for your reference a chart showing how the AQI "yardstick" measures air pollution and the consequent health concerns.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal. Staff from the Department of Environmental Protection's Bureau of Air Quality are here today and will provide additional information on this rulemaking. If you have any questions, I'm very confident they can answer accordingly.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vicki". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

Representative Vicki Doudera

Air Quality Index (AQI) Basics

[Versión en Español \(/aqi/aqi-basics-in-spanish\)](#)

What is the U.S. Air Quality Index (AQI)?

The U.S. AQI is EPA's index for reporting air quality.

How does the AQI work?

Think of the AQI as a yardstick that runs from 0 to 500. The higher the AQI value, the greater the level of air pollution and the greater the health concern. For example, an AQI value of 50 or below represents good air quality, while an AQI value over 300 represents hazardous air quality.

For each pollutant an AQI value of 100 generally corresponds to an ambient air concentration that equals the level of the short-term national ambient air quality standard for protection of public health. AQI values at or below 100 are generally thought of as satisfactory. When AQI values are above 100, air quality is unhealthy: at first for certain sensitive groups of people, then for everyone as AQI values get higher.

The AQI is divided into six categories. Each category corresponds to a different level of health concern. Each category also has a specific color. The color makes it easy for people to quickly determine whether air quality is reaching unhealthy levels in their communities.

AQI Basics for Ozone and Particle Pollution

Daily AQI Color	Levels of Concern	Values of Index	Description of Air Quality
Green	Good	0 to 50	Air quality is satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Yellow	Moderate	51 to 100	Air quality is acceptable. However, there may be a risk for some people, particularly those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Orange	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101 to 150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is less likely to be affected.
Red	Unhealthy	151 to 200	Some members of the general public may experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.

Daily AQI Color	Levels of Concern	Values of Index	Description of Air Quality
Purple	Very Unhealthy	201 to 300	Health alert: The risk of health effects is increased for everyone.
Maroon	Hazardous	301 and higher	Health warning of emergency conditions: everyone is more likely to be affected.

See the [Activity Guides \(/publications/activity-guides-publications\)](/publications/activity-guides-publications) to learn ways to protect your health when the AQI reaches unhealthy levels.

Five major pollutants

EPA establishes an AQI for five major air pollutants regulated by the Clean Air Act. Each of these pollutants has a national air quality standard set by EPA to protect public health:

- ground-level ozone
- particle pollution (also known as particulate matter, including PM2.5 and PM10)
- carbon monoxide
- sulfur dioxide
- nitrogen dioxide

[Using the Air Quality Index \(/aqi/aqi-basics/using-air-quality-index\)](/aqi/aqi-basics/using-air-quality-index)

[Technical Assistance Document for the Reporting of Daily Air Quality – the Air Quality Index \(AQI\) \(/publications/air-quality-index/technical-assistance-document-for-reporting-the-daily-aqi\)](/publications/air-quality-index/technical-assistance-document-for-reporting-the-daily-aqi)
