

Testimony of Jacob Hepner, volunteer firefighter, Waldo, Maine.
In SUPPORT of LD 222 and LD400

Before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee
February 26, 2025

Senator Templer, Representative Doudera, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Jacob Hepner. I am a volunteer firefighter in the town of Waldo where I also live. Please accept this testimony in support of LD 222 and LD 400, which would create programs to inventory, safely store and eventually dispose of PFAS laden fire-fighting foam.

Over my 18 years as a firefighter including 10 years as Assistant Chief and 5 years as a Chief I have worked to protect the citizens of my town from various threats to their health and wellbeing including fire, automobile accidents, propane leaks, and flooding. As our knowledge of the extent of the use of PFAS expands I have become aware of another threat to their safety which is the accumulation and inadequate storage of PFAS containing fire retardant foam concentrate in our firehouse and many other firehouses all over the state.

As a firefighter I use my training to do my job. I have not been trained in the safe handling and storage of toxic chemicals and am very uneasy at being required to do so. As I have attempted to find a safe way to deal with the foam concentrate at my own firehouse I have found no safe and affordable options for its disposal. Until safe options are created the storage of these concentrates and the protection of local groundwater and public safety will continue to depend on firefighters. This is a job for professional people with the training and protective equipment to insure that these chemicals are safely moved and stored. This is where we need your help.

The risk that these concentrates pose to the groundwater in my town and in so many others is a serious concern and deserves action. There are an estimated 50,000 gallons of foam concentrate that remain in storage all over the state, about 35 times the amount released recently at the Brunswick airport. These chemicals are extremely persistent in the environment and are known carcinogens. Without a plan to safely identify, store and eventually destroy these stocks of chemicals the risks to firefighters, groundwater, and the environment will continue.

I urge you to vote unanimously "Ought to Pass on LD 222 and LD400

Thank you for your time,

Jacob Hepner