

Testimony of Charlotte Torrey

In Opposition to LD 827 An Act to Allow the Sale of Polymer-coated Cookware That Is Authorized for Food Contact by the United States Food and Drug Administration and LD 987 An Act Clarifying Exemptions from the Notification Requirements for Products Containing PFAS

Before the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Maine Legislature, Augusta, ME
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Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, members of the Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today. My name is Charlotte Torrey, and I am a current junior at Colby College in Waterville, where I am pursuing a double-major in chemistry and environmental policy. I have conducted research in both fields of study, and one of my projects has focused on the effects of PFAS contamination on farmers in Maine.

I would like to strongly **oppose** both bills LD827 and LD987. Mainers are acutely aware of the dangers that PFAS pose to human health. Maine has historically passed an impressive amount of legislation protecting its residents from the very severe health risks posed by PFAS exposure. It has been a great strength of the state legislature here since the problem was identified. I would like to sincerely thank Maine legislators for putting these protective policies in place.

LD827 would allow for FDA-authorized polymers to coat cookware. The EPA has not yet performed risk assessments for these specific polymers. There is no scientific evidence that these chemicals are safe for human exposure. The FDA is also far behind the states in making sure that chemicals are safe for humans. FDA approval alone, in this case, is an insufficient baseline for determining whether or not chemicals are safe.

There is an argument that PTFE and PFA are much more stable than other restricted PFAS, even if exposed to heat up to 500 degrees Fahrenheit. This is not entirely true. These chemicals can easily break down into smaller PFAS that are toxic when heated.¹ Pans even tend to exceed 500 degrees within 3 minutes of cooking.² Consumers are also generally unlikely to abide by the conditions under which the cookware industry claims their products are safe, including to avoid using steel utensils and abrasive cleaners. Passing this bill would endanger consumers.

The cookware industry claims that fluoropolymers such as PTFE, since they are called “polymers of low concern,” do not pose a threat to human health. This is untrue. PTFE exposure poses a significant risk to male reproductive health.³ We know from other studies that PTFE in cookware and other food contact materials can leach dangerous PFAS residuals into food.⁴ Recent research also shows that fluoropolymers can become microplastics, which would contaminate food.⁵

LD987 seeks to remove the ban on the use of PFAS in textiles and motorized vehicle refrigerants, ~~as well as other products such as turf.~~ These routes have a high potential to expose a

great deal of PFAS to humans. People interact with textiles of all kinds as well as these refrigerants every day. ~~Children, who are more vulnerable to adverse health effects from chemical exposure at their young age, play sports on turf fields.~~ Removing this ban is dangerous and unnecessary.

For several years, I have been very impressed by Maine's leading role in addressing the PFAS crisis. Three years ago, I began to conduct research considering the effects of PFAS contamination on Maine farmers. One thing that they all agreed on was that they, too, thought that Maine was a national leader in the issue, and they were at least glad to be in a state that supports them. Passing these bills would undermine the state's standing on fighting PFAS. The Maine state legislature needs to continue to protect its people from toxic substances. This means that these two bills cannot pass. Please vote "*ought not to pass*" on both LD 827 and LD 987. Thank you.

References

¹ Keller et al. Toxicity of Tetrafluoroethylene and S-(1,1,2,2-tetrafluoroethyl)-L-cysteine in Rats and Mice. *Toxicological Sciences*, **56**(2). August 1, 2000. <https://doi.org/10.1093/toxsci/56.2.414>.

² Environmental Working Group. *Canaries in the Kitchen*. <https://www.ewg.org/research/canaries-kitchen>.

³ Zhang et al. Association of mixed exposure to microplastics with sperm dysfunction: a multi-site study in China. *EBioMedicine* **108**. October 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ebiom.2024.105369>.

⁴ Lohmann et al. Are Fluoropolymers Really of Low Concern for Human and Environmental Health and Separate from Other PFAS? *Environmental Science and Technology* **54**(20). October 12, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.est.0c03244>.

⁵ Luo et al. Raman imaging for the identification of Teflon microplastics and nanoplastics released from non-stick cookware. *Science of the Total Environment* **851**(2). December 10, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2022.158293>.