



Solutions for a
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Vice President of Policy and Advocacy, Defend Our Health
In Opposition to LD 887 "An Act to Make Manufacturers Responsible for Proper Disposal of
Abortion Drugs and Require a Health Care Provider to Be Physically Present During a Chemical
Abortion"

Before the Judiciary Committee
March 28, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the Vice President of Policy and Advocacy for Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health's mission is to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food and drinking water, healthy homes, and products that are toxic-free and climate friendly. I am here to testify opposition of LD 887 "An Act to Make Manufacturers Responsible for Proper Disposal of Abortion Drugs and Require a Health Care Provider to Be Physically Present During a Chemical Abortion".

Defend Our Health has worked for the past several years to protect the health and environment of all Mainers from toxics, including toxics that are present in wastewater. As many of you are aware, Maine is in the middle of a PFAS crisis, a crisis that has particularly impacted Maine farmers and rural residential well owners across the state. PFAS has contaminated drinking water and farmland across the state because of state-sponsored policies that allowed for the land application of sludge on farmland. Sludge is waste from wastewater treatment facilities. While we appreciate the sponsor's concerns for exposure to endocrine disruptors via wastewater, we feel this legislation isn't practical and ignores other, far more concerning toxics in wastewater.

Endocrine disruptors can impact fertility, metabolism, and can diminish responses to vaccines. However, it is our understanding that the American Medical Association, the Endocrine Society, and other reputable medical associations do not recognize Mifepristone as an endocrine disrupter. We do agree that we must do what we can to protect people from exposure to endocrine disruptors and there are many, many endocrine disruptors in wastewater. So, when you are looking at liability section in this law, there are endocrine disruptors in products we use every day. Phthalates in cosmetics and children's toys, polybrominated flame retardants in carpets and furniture, and Per and Polyfluoroalkyl or PFAS substances in everything from cookware to dental floss. These also end up in wastewater at significantly higher rates than Mifepristone. It doesn't seem logical to require manufacturers of Mifepristone to pay for remediation when other manufacturers that utilize many other actual toxic endocrine disruptors, are not required to do the same thing.

From a wastewater treatment perspective, this bill is very light on specifics on how, exactly, the law is going to be enforced. It puts the onus on the manufacturer for remediation if Mifepristone ends up in wastewater treatment facilities. How will that be tracked? Wastewater treatment facilities don't have a standard, mandated schedule to test for pharmaceuticals in their systems. This law does not require testing so where is the data coming from to show that Mifepristone is

in the waste stream? I spoke with some colleagues in the wastewater world and was told that there are no commercial laboratories that specifically test for Mifepristone, that it would more than likely be greatly diluted before it could even be tested, and that tracing detection back to a manufacturer would very likely be resource intensive and likely impossible given the information available. It appears that implementing and enforcing this legislation isn't even feasible. It will also add additional work and costs for our already overburdened wastewater treatment colleagues. Additionally, the Environmental Protection Agency has done studies over the years and found that pharmaceutical concentrations are low in wastewater and that "depending on the drug, it would take months to decades of drinking two liters of raw, untreated wastewater per day to expose a person to a single dose"¹.

Whether it's pharmaceuticals or toxic chemicals like PFAS, phthalates or bisphenols, we need to make sure that Mainers are not exposed to the toxic sludge and wastewater effluent that comes from wastewater treatment facilities. Mifepristone has low water solubility so it's more likely to end up in wastewater sludge than the wastewater that is discharged as effluent. The good news is, Maine banned the land application of sludge on farmland, one of the main sources of possible exposure from waste from wastewater treatment facilities. While there are more things we can do to protect the public from exposure to the toxics in wastewater, like requiring treatment of landfill leachate before it's sent back to wastewater treatment facilities and setting effluent discharge standards for toxics being discharged into our waterways, this particular piece of legislation is not going to help protect Mainers. We also need to make sure we are focusing on the real toxic endocrine disruptors that are impacting people's daily lives. Toxics like PFAS and phthalates that can be found in consumer products, things that our children are exposed to everyday. We need to focus on fighting for policies to require that the products we use on a daily basis are safe for our families. Therefore, we urge you to vote "ought not to pass" on LD 887.

¹ Putterman, S. (2023, May 31). *Anti-abortion group misleads in claims about abortion pill*. PolitiFact. <https://www.politifact.com/article/2023/may/31/anti-abortion-advocates-turn-to-the-environment-is/>