



Solutions for a
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Vice President of Policy and Advocacy, Defend Our Health
In Support of LD 991 "An Act to Require General Public Notification of Oil Terminal Facility Transfer
Activities" before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee
April 14, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the Vice President of Policy and Advocacy for Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health works to make sure everyone has equal access to safe food, safe drinking water, healthy homes and toxic-free, climate-friendly products. I am here to testify in support of LD 991 "An Act to Require General Public Notification of Oil Terminal Facility Transfer Activities"

The so-called "tank farm" facilities in South Portland are a source of numerous, well-founded concerns about the health and safety impacts on the community of South Portland. As we began learning more than four years ago, oil tank owners have previously violated safety regulations for allowable levels of toxic emissions from their tank farms, including the permitted limit of volatile organic compounds (VOC). VOCs are chemicals that evaporate at room temperature. Some VOCs coming off the tank farms include Benzene and Toluene, both of which are harmful to humans. Some of the groups most vulnerable to these toxic chemicals are pregnant women, babies, and young children. Toxic chemical exposure threatens children's developing bodies and brains with health harms that can have lifelong impacts. Residents of several South Portland neighborhoods have been disproportionately exposed to toxic chemicals because where they live happens to be where the global businesses that own and profit from the oil-tank farms are located. While the tank farms appear to now be in compliance, there are still toxic emissions coming from the facilities.

This committee worked on important legislation in the 130th legislature to require that these tank farms provide information, including fence-line monitoring of toxic emissions, from the tanks. While we appreciate the work that the Department is doing to monitor the emissions coming from the tank farms, the community is still dealing with the emissions coming off of the tankers and the tanks. LD 991 would help provide those in the community information so they can choose what steps they want to take to protect themselves from the burst emissions that happen when the tankers are transferring the oil from tankers to the tanks. When tankers offload, the petroleum is pumped from ship to the tanks. During this process the vents in the tanks are venting out the toxic fumes. These burst emissions can last anywhere from 12-24 hours, depending on the amount of petroleum being offloaded, releasing toxic emissions that include volatile organic compounds. By requiring the facilities to provide adequate notice to the community when these burst emissions will be happening, this will allow those that live near the facilities time to decide if they want to remain indoors, close their windows and doors, or leave the area while the work is being done. As a former resident of South Portland, I vividly remember the stench that would waft into my house at odd hours, sometimes waking me up in the middle of the night and forcing me to close my windows. It would have been nice to have notice of when this was going to be happening so I could take steps to mitigate it in my home.

LD 991 simply requires notification to allow the residents to protect themselves as they feel necessary. We urge you to vote "ought to pass on LD 991".