



Slingshot
53 Exchange Street, #200
Portland, ME 04101
slingshot.org

Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 1604

*An Act to Protect Groundwater and Surface Waters from
Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances from Landfill Leachate*

Dana Colihan, Co-Executive Director | April 28th, 2025

Good morning Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and Members of the Environment & Natural Resources Committee.

My name is Dana Colihan, I am Co-Executive Director of Slingshot. I am testifying in support of LD 1604. Slingshot is an environmental health and justice organization, working alongside communities most impacted by environmental threats to take aim at polluters and build community power. We believe everyone deserves the right to breathe clean air, drink clean water, and live in healthy, vibrant communities, which is why we are testifying in support of this bill.

We are currently facing one of the largest water contamination crises of our time. Communities around the country are discovering daily that their water is polluted with per and polyfluoroalkyl substances or PFAS. PFAS are a toxic, man-made class of chemicals, commonly known as "forever chemicals," which were created by chemical companies for things like non-stick coating or fire fighting foam. However, PFAS have been linked to serious health impacts like kidney cancer, reduced immune system function, thyroid disease, liver damage, and more.

Because of PFAS's pervasiveness in our products, unfortunately it comes as no surprise that PFAS are pervasive in landfill leachate—the landfill "juice" formed when rainwater filters through landfill waste.

This is particularly concerning for two reasons. The EPA has said that all landfills eventually leak, which means that claims that "state of the art technology" will protect our groundwater and our communities are not true. Secondly, landfill leachate is not currently being treated for PFAS before being discharged as effluent in Maine's water and rivers.¹

The Department of Environmental Protection's January 2024 report to the legislature on the Testing of Landfill Leachate found PFAS present in every single landfill tested, and as high as 18,540 parts per trillion at the Hartland Landfill. Notably, the report explicitly

¹U.S. EPA, Lining of Waste Impoundments and Disposal Facilities, SW-870, National Technical Information Service, March 1983, NTIS publication number PB86-192796

acknowledged the potential of landfill leachate to local impact groundwater or surface water.² This study did not even consider Maine's 400 closed landfills, most of which are unlined.

LD 1604 takes critical steps to protect Maine waters from PFAS from landfill leachate through four crucial steps:

- 1) **Implementing Leachate Reporting:** This information is currently not easily accessible, and will provide critical transparency on the origin, volume, and final disposal of leachate.
- 2) **Directing the DEP to Set Discharge Limits for PFAS in Effluent:** We do not currently have limits for PFAS effluent discharge into our waterways. While there are multiple ways for PFAS to enter our environment, creating effluent standards is an essential step to protect our communities and ecosystems from toxic "forever" chemicals.
- 3) **Requiring further Leachate Testing:** In the DEP's 2024 report, the department already recommended continued testing of landfill leachate. LD 1604 implements quarterly, random, third-party leachate testing, which will ensure independent oversight.
- 4) **Enabling Abutting Residents to Test their Drinking Water Wells for PFAS:** Residents living near landfills have the right to know if their drinking water is safe. The cost of PFAS testing can be prohibitive to residents discovering if their water is contaminated or not. LD 1604 will provide residents with private drinking water sources within one mile of a landfill the ability to have their private wells tested for PFAS upon request, at the expense of the landfill licensee. Accessible testing is critical for discovering contamination and protecting public health, and should not come at the expense of impacted residents.

In summary, LD 1604 is essential to protect Maine's waterways from PFAS from landfill leachate; to protect the public health of Mainers living adjacent to landfills, and to for further testing, reporting, and transparency on the management of leachate across the state. We hope you take decisive action to protect our communities and environment by voting to ought pass. Thank you.

² *Report on the Testing of Landfill Leachate for Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substance Contamination*, 16 MAINE DEP'T ENV'T PROT. (Jan. 2024), available at Report