DEFEND OUR HEALTH

Solutions for a Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sergio Cahueque, Organizer at Defend Our Health
In Support of LD 2115, "An Act to Protect Private Wells from Hazardous Substances"
Before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee
January 28, 2026

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Sergio Cahueque and I am an organizer at 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 in support of LD 2115, "An Act to Protect Private Wells from Hazardous Substances".

Over the past several years we have learned a lot about the PFAS contamination across Maine and the significant health risks associated with exposure to these "forever chemicals" including increased rates of certain types of cancer, fertility issues, and neurodevelopmental issues in children. These toxic chemicals have polluted our farmland and drinking water throughout the state.

Much of the contamination across the state is due to the state-sponsored spreading of PFAS-contaminated sludge on farmland. The good news is that the state is helping cover the cost for some PFAS contaminated residential wells. If the contamination can be tied back to the sludge spreading on nearby farmland, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is helping with the cost of testing and remediation. However, sludge spreading is not the only source of contamination. Other sources of contamination could include AFFF firefighting foam, which can end up in our aquifers during firefighter training or other firefighter maneuvers. Leachate from landfills can pollute groundwater as can effluent being discharged from municipalities and industries across the state. PFAS is ubiquitous and highly mobile, making it easy to contaminate drinking water.

Public water supplies in Maine and community water sources that service schools and daycares will test and treat for PFAS. But most Maine households do not get their drinking water from public water supplies, but rather from residential wells. Over half of Maine residents get their drinking water from a residential well, the highest percentage in the nation. Residential wells are not regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act, so residents are responsible for the cost of testing and remediation. PFAS testing can be cost prohibitive for many families. The cost ranges from $250-300 for a DEP certified approved test. We need to make sure that everybody relying on residential wells can get their wells tested regardless of their ability to pay for an expensive PFAS test.

LD 2115 will take over the "Land Application Contaminant Monitoring" which was never used and never had any money in it, so it will not affect any current PFAS program, testing, or

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remediation. Instead, it will hugely benefit communities like Brunswick, who are still dealing with the largest toxic chemical spill in Maine's history and the 6th largest in the country. The spill of over 1400 gallons of PFAS-ladden AFFF foam mixed with over 50 thousand gallons of water spilling into the surrounding community has had a detrimental impact on the community, contaminating nearby waterways and presenting a serious, long-term threat to soil, groundwater, air quality, and public health. Some community members haven't had access to cost-prohibitive PFAS water testing and don't know if their well water is safe for drinking.

Everyone deserves access to safe drinking water. LD 2115 would provide necessary resources to Mainers who may otherwise not be able to get their drinking water tested. We urge the committee to vote "ought to pass" for LD 2115.

Thank you.