

The Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Testimony in Support Of

LD 558 Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry To Study Alternative Cropping Systems for Farmers Affected by Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Contamination

Chairman Dill, Chairwoman O'Neil, and Honorable Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of **LD 558 Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry To Study Alternative Cropping Systems for Farmers Affected by Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Contamination.**

My name is Jacquelyn Elliott and I live in Waterboro, Maine. I have advocated for environmental justice and health matters for decades. Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl (PFOA/PFOS) chemicals have initiated a significant portion of that advocacy in recent years.

The detrimental environmental and health impacts of these ubiquitous "forever chemicals" are a matter of great concern as we are faced with contaminated lands and waters and human bodies showing levels of these toxins in blood and urine.

Adverse health impacts include elevated cholesterol levels; damage to liver and kidney function; thyroid disease; adverse outcomes on fertility and reproduction including low birth weight; and weakening of the immune system. Studies have shown links between PFAS exposure and increased risk of certain cancers.

What is known, is that PFAS are abundant in the products people use every day. They are found in carpeting, fabrics, clothing, food packaging and the pots and pans we cook with. They are in firefighting foams utilized at airports; used to train firefighters; and employed for firefighting at military bases. These dangerous PFAS chemicals find their way into waste treatment facilities and accumulate in the sludge produced.

It is believed the source of farmland and well contamination has been the use of sewage sludge land spread for fertilizer. This has been promoted as a safe, inexpensive alternative for fertilizer.

Elliott
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The dangers posed from land spreading of sludge have been of concern for many years. Regulation is uneven. Maine added some restrictions last year and municipalities in Florida, Michigan and Wisconsin have banned its spreading altogether.

The State has the growing problem of PFAS contamination of farmland and wells. Farmers have been forced to cease operations due to contaminated milk and beef. They are facing uncertain futures without viable ways to provide for their livelihoods. Remediation of land and water, if possible, is costly.

LD 558 would provide an opportunity to study ways of crop production that could return practicable and profitable use of the lands and water to affected farmers. Going forward, we must develop methods and policies that preclude the use of these dangerous, and in most instances, needless chemicals.

In the meantime, I ask that you vote this legislation As Ought to Pass. Thank you for considering my comments. My contact information follows.

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