



Solutions for a
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, State Advocacy Director, Defend Our Health in SUPPORT of LD 558, "A Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry To Study Alternative Cropping Systems for Farmers Affected by Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Contamination"
Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee
March 25, 2021

Good Morning, Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil and members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the director of advocacy for Defend Our Health, formerly known as the Environmental Health Strategy Center. Defend's mission is to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food, safe drinking water, healthy homes and toxic-free, climate-friendly products. Please accept this testimony in support of LD 559, "A Resolve, Directing the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry To Study Alternative Cropping Systems for Farmers Affected by Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Contamination". This resolve would direct the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, in consultation with the University of Maine, to study alternative cropping systems that are more cost-effective than soil and water remediation systems for farmers whose land has been contaminated by perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS.

Nearly every person in the US – from newborns to seniors – have toxic Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances or PFAS in their blood. PFAS are persistent chemicals that do not break down and can remain both in the human body and in the environment for years. They are called "forever chemicals" for a reason. We are exposed to these toxic chemicals in a variety of products including food packaging, cooking supplies, clothing and furniture. PFAS have been linked to interference with normal brain development in children, diminish response to vaccines and harm the immune system, may increase the risk of some cancers, may lower a woman's chance of getting pregnant, and have been associated with liver problems and increased cholesterol levels.

Certainly, you have seen the stories in both the local and national news about the farmers and other landowners who have been impacted by the issue of PFAS contamination in Maine. The Stoneridge Farm in Arundel was the first farm in the state to find incredibly high levels of PFAS in their milk. This 100-year-old family dairy farm has been destroyed by PFAS contamination. The Tozier Farm in Fairfield found levels of PFAS in their cows' milk that is likely the highest levels identified in North America. Additionally, at least 54 wells around the Tozier farm have been found to have extremely high levels of PFAS in them. This is just the tip of the toxic iceberg. The number of contaminated farms and wells will continue to grow as DCAF and the DEP do more testing. The list of farmers who find themselves with impacted farms will also continue to grow.



Farmers are experiencing these issues through no fault of their own. They were assured by the state that spreading biosolids on their land was safe, economical, and even a public service to their communities. They did their part and now we need to help them. We need to come up with alternatives to help the farmers impacted by this contamination. It should not just be up to farmers come up with solutions to deal with the contamination of their land by chemicals that most have never even heard of before. Both DCAF and the DEP should be giving them guidance and support to figure out the best way for these farmers to move forward and to continue to be able to support themselves and their families while remaining on their farms.

Additionally, without programs and resources in place, many farmers will be hesitant to get their farms tested and will be less motivated to address the issue. This bill helps address those concerns by showing those impacted farmers that the state is working to come up with alternatives, allowing them to continue to work and make a living off of the land that they love and, for many, has been in their family for generations.

Therefore, Defend Our Health urges that the committee vote unanimously “ought to pass” on LD 558. Thank you for your time.