



**Testimony of the Environmental Priorities Coalition**

**Supporting LD 2013**

***An Act Relating to Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances  
Contamination in the State***

**Before the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee**

**March 15, 2022**

Good morning Senator Dill, Representative O’Neil, and members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee. My name is Beth Ahearn and I offer testimony on behalf of the Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC) in support of LD 2013. The EPC is a partnership of thirty-seven conservation, environmental, and public health organizations who unify around a common agenda every year. The EPC represents over 120,000 members in Maine who want to protect the good health, good jobs, and quality of life that depend upon a healthy environment. LD 2013 is a late added priority bills for our coalition this year.

LD 2013 will provide funding and resources to support Maine farmers impacted by PFAS contamination. PFAS contamination threatens Maine farmers and farmland. Through no fault of their own, farmers across the state are facing loss of livelihood due to contamination from PFAS, the so-called “forever chemicals.” PFAS are toxic, persistent, and bioaccumulative, leading to possible health impacts including fertility issues and increases in certain types of cancer. State-sponsored programs that urged farmers to spread biosolids on their farmland have led to PFAS pollution across the state, contaminating Maine farmland and endangering the health and livelihood of Maine farmers.

Maine farmers are not responsible for this contamination and should not bear the burden of remediation. Many farmers are doing the right thing by stopping production and sales until they know their products are safe, but doing so often leads to loss of the only source of revenue for these families. Farmers with contaminated farmland need assistance immediately to help supplement their income and to pay wages of farm staff that depend on them.

Maine can and should be self-reliant with its food supply and we need to ensure that farmers have the financial, technical, health, and land resources they need to create a vibrant Maine agriculture. While some funding for PFAS mitigation has been proposed in the Governor's budget, it is not enough. Estimates from Maine DEP put state costs at \$10-20M annually, and that's without assistance for farmers.

The state must step in to help farmers deal with the impacts of this contamination. Allocating \$100 million as a safety net for farmers affected by PFAS is an essential first step. LD 2013 would provide funding opportunities to help impacted farmers through income replacement and farm buyouts if necessary. The bill would also set up a medical monitoring program to help impacted communities monitor their health for possible impacts due to PFAS exposure.

**We urge a unanimous 'Ought to Pass' report on LD 2013 to establish the PFAS Impacted Farmer Mitigation Fund.**