

Testimony of Lani Graham, MD, MPH
Freeport, Maine

IN SUPPORT OF LD 2013

An act Regarding to Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substance Contamination in the State

Presented by Senator Jim Dill

Before the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee:

Good morning, Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil, and Members of the Committee. My name is Lani Graham. I am a family practice physician and former Chief Public Health officer for Maine.

Currently, I serve on the Public Health Committee for the Maine Medical Association (MMA), and in 2019, I represented the Maine Public Health Association (MPHA) on the Governor's Task Force established to help Maine address our state's contamination by the chemical family known as PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances). Over the past two years I have been in this legislature many times addressing PFAS issues that this state is confronting. I am here today in support of LD 2013.

As my area of expertise is health, I want to briefly mention that this family of chemicals has already been shown to be associated with adverse health effects, including decreasing the normal responsiveness of the immune system and a woman's chance of becoming pregnant; as well as increasing the risk of thyroid disease, elevated cholesterol levels, and the occurrence of several cancers. Sadly, research into health effects is just beginning and some Maine farmers, through no fault of their own, appear to be joining the guinea pig group in addition to having their means of making a living eliminated.

Maine farmers have done nothing wrong. Instead, they are the victims of profit driven companies who knew better. The long-term solution may be to assure that those companies pay compensation for their carelessness. But that is a long-term solution. Maine farmers need help now to recover their losses as well as understand how their own

health may be affected by this contamination. The funding represented by this bill makes that possible.

While I was pleased to see that there are provisions for a medical monitoring program and for educational efforts, I was disappointed to see that no one on the Advisory Committee for this funding has health or educational expertise. I believe this is a significant deficit that the committee should rectify. Recommendations regarding the medical monitoring are complex. And medical monitoring is incomplete without the education of physicians and other health care clinicians. And of course, education of the public is vital. And that is a public health function.

But generally, the bill is a good one and I urge its passage.

Thank you for your attention, I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.