

Sarah Haven
Alna
LD 2013

My name is Sarah Haven and I live in Alna. I am a farmer and am here to testify in support of LD 2013, An Act Relating to Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Contamination in the State. As most of us know now, PFAS contamination has already massively affected a handful of Maine small farms and will continue impacting more farms as more testing is done. Those farmers who are courageously coming forward are choosing to pause all sales, production, and essentially their entire livelihood in an act of transparency.

This contamination is not only affecting these farmers financially. This is not just about losing your business. It's about losing your life as you know it, the land you love, you and your family's health, and so much more. This is a situation that is impacting the entire physical, mental and emotional well-being of those affected. It is trauma and grief. It is utterly heartbreaking to see these farms and farm families process the fallout of what this contamination means.

It is the responsibility of the state to acknowledge their past actions and provide compensation to those affected. This acknowledgment and assistance needs to go above and beyond direct financial compensation. In addition to replacement of 2022 projected income and mortgage payments, the state needs to provide a well rounded support network for these farmers including: lifelong health monitoring and mental health care, assistance in pivoting business plans, and ultimately support in dealing with the contaminated land sale or remediation and the buying of new farmland in a challenging real estate market. It is the least we can do.

Farmers pour care and conscientiousness to the land they tend to. In the world of organic agriculture, they aspire to produce clean and healthy food in our modern age of pollutants and chemicals. As a state, Maine has the most resilient, supportive, and strong farming community I have witnessed. The support for local food is robust. In these years of pandemic, farmers stepped up to the table to provide abundant, clean and safe food to Mainers when grocery store shelves were empty.

I truly hope that everyone who finds value in eating locally can also value the human lives behind that ideology. We would not have access to the healthy food we choose to consume if not for these farmers. Let's continue to be strong in our support of Maine farmers in all the ways they need support, not only supporting them when it comes to our own body's health and what we are eating, but fully supporting them when they need our help.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.