

Justin Morace
Albion
LD 2013

Senator Dill, Representative O'Neil, and esteemed members of the committee,
My name is Justin Morace. My wife and I are vegetable farmers in Albion. We wholesale our vegetables to grocery stores across the state. In Late January, we discovered that both my farm wells were contaminated with PFAS. Needless to say, we halted vegetable sales immediately. Today, I speak in support of LD 2013.

I don't want to spend much time on the absurdity of all this, but I just had to take a moment to call out some details of the indiscretion that created this mess. The sludge that contaminated my family's well water came from Kennebec Sanitary Treatment District, which in the licensing documents is characterized as handling "a combination of domestic and industrial wastewater. Keyes Fiber Co., a molded paperboard manufacturer, contributes approximately 49% of the wastewater flow... " Again, the sludge being delivered to farmers in this area as fertilizer was 49% industrial waste. No one thought twice about this?

Now I just want to be clear, that my farm is not one of the 700 sites the DEP is claiming to require PFAS investigations. My farm and my family are the collateral damage of one of these sites. Our farm was never spread with sludge. The sludge was spread on a neighboring farm. The concentration of PFAS chemicals was so high, that my irrigation well is testing 9000 ppt, 25 years later. And 25 years later the sludge spread next door contaminated new acreage, my acreage, via the ground water we share. This tragedy is affecting more than just the 700 sites. Currently my family and I are waiting on tests to determine the extent to which our irrigation well contaminated our crop ground. Waiting on tests to see whether it's even feasible to filter a high output well like our irrigation well with such high contamination. Waiting to find out if we have a farm or a liability.

They say that the state of Maine is on the forefront in addressing PFAS. It seems like all we've learned is that we don't know enough. We are in triage mode here in Maine. PFAS is in our soil and water, and farmers with contaminated products-- hay, produce, milk-- have nowhere to dispose of them. Farmers are being told to dump their milk, and return contaminated hay back to where it came from to spread out on the most contaminated fields. No one knows what to do with this stuff. The landfills don't even want it. Farms are not closed systems, and contaminated products are moving around the state, continuing to do more damage 25 years later.

Let's get this garbage out of our food system and our water supply. It's time for the state to step up to the plate. It's going to take a generous aid package – for farmer aid, research, healthcare and remediation. Let's not be another generation that leaves this mess to the next. LD 2013 is a step in the right direction.