

Testimony in Support of LD 2013, and An Act Relating To Perfluoroalkyl And Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Contamination In The State

Dear Senator Dill, Representative O'Neill and honorable members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My wife and I own and manage Songbird Farm in Unity. By now, most of you are aware of our situation, so I will be brief describing what has happened to our farm and to our family.

I am testifying because my family needs your help. But I am also testifying on behalf of the farms who can't afford the risk of going public. I'm testifying on behalf of farms who look at potential contamination and feel caught between their debt load and the confidence of their buyers. The state needs the partnership of the farming community if it is going to solve the problem of PFAS in our food system. We need a robust safety net so no one goes bankrupt because of this. Given the State's role promoting and licensing sludge spreading on farms, the State has a very real obligation to all of us whose land, water, crops, and livestock are contaminated with these chemicals. The state has a very real obligation to those of us whose bodies are contaminated.

This December we learned that our land was licensed and spread with PFAS laden municipal sludge from the Portland Water District and the Kennebec Sanitary Treatment District in the early 1990s. Now, thirty years later, our soils read between 250 and 475 parts per billion for the sum of six PFAS. The state's testing threshold is around 5 parts per billion. Our drinking water reads over 400 times the state's current safety threshold. My wife and I have PFAS exposure equivalent to and grossly exceeding the levels of factory workers where these chemicals were manufactured. From what we understand, this puts us at an unstudied exposure level. What health outcomes might we look forward to? PFOA and PFOS stay in the body for an incredibly long time, but they can leave through the placenta and through breast milk. What illnesses can the next generation of rural Mainers look forward to?

Affected farms need a four tier aid package.

- (1) We need emergency income replacement during the discovery process,
- (2) Overlapping this period, we need a twelve month indemnification plan for crop farmers whose growing seasons are fundamentally disrupted. This plan should account for business growth and debt load.
- (3) The state must provide a pivot fund so farms can adapt to and/or mitigate the contamination. These funds should include investments in new infrastructure and technical assistance. This tier must include a fair market value farm buy-out.
- (4) Maine must offer lifetime health monitoring to PFAS affected farmers and other people exposed to these chemicals in Maine. When PFAS related health problems crop up, the State needs to be there to fully fund treatment. Johanna and my blood serum levels are heavily skewed towards the chemical profile of our soil, suggesting that ours may be primarily a workplace exposure rather than a question

of drinking contaminated water alone. All PFAS affected Mainers need this assistance, but agricultural exposure is directly within the purview of the ACF Committee.

Our business is on the rocks and our health has been put at risk. Our son's health has been put at risk. Try to calculate the economic costs of that. Then multiply it by the number of farms who are only now learning of their contamination. Multiply it by the number of farms who are avoiding testing because they are terrified what the results might do to their lives and livelihoods. The state has no safety net in place for farms like ours. Clearly we need one, and we need it fast.

Some of you may be concerned about the price tag on this bill. But the state set this crisis in motion when it signed the sludge licenses. The invoice has long since been written. The costs are real. Are farmers going to have to shoulder the burden? Or is the State of Maine willing to do the right thing?

Thank you for your time

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