

**Written Testimony
Before the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
R. Scott Sanderson
Conservation Law Foundation
March 15, 2022**

**Re: LD 2013 – An Act Relating to Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances
Contamination in the State**

Senator Dill, Representative O’Neil, and Members of the Committee,

Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) is pleased to offer this written testimony to the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. CLF strongly supports LD 2013, legislation that would support farmers harmed by Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination on their farmland.

CLF is a nonprofit, member-supported advocacy organization that protects New England’s environment for the benefit of all people. We use the law, science, and the market to create solutions that preserve our natural resources, build healthy communities, and sustain a vibrant economy. CLF works to support sustainable agriculture in Maine for the many health, environmental, and economic benefits it provides our communities. We work closely with family farmers in Maine through our Legal Food Hub program, which offers pro bono legal assistance to income-eligible small farmers.

Maine’s family farms play a critical role in stewarding our lands and feeding our communities. Through our Legal Food Hub, we support farmers who work tirelessly to grow food for Mainers while building the health of the soil and protecting our natural resources. Despite their importance to our state, many of our farmers face significant economic challenges: the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) most recent survey found that farms in Maine averaged \$16,958 in annual net farm income.¹

Farm families are facing a newly-identified, existential threat: PFAS contamination on farmland. The presence of PFAS in farmland soils is devastating to farmers who have spent their lives building their farm business. These toxic “forever chemicals,” which persist for long periods and are harmful to human health and the environment, likely entered agricultural soils through biosolids spread in compliance with Maine’s Septage Management Rules over the past several decades. As farmers scramble to obtain testing and understand whether their farm is potentially affected, they face fears not only about their livelihood and the future of their land but also the

¹ USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture, Maine State Profile,
https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Maine/cp99023.pdf.

risks that contamination may pose to their family's health. They need support to work through this daunting array of issues.

LD 2013 is a key step in supporting farmers facing the effects of PFAS contamination from past spreading. The bill would create a critical safety net for farmers by creating an advisory council to oversee funding for health monitoring, environmental testing, mitigation infrastructure, technical assistance, and more. As farmers respond to this evolving situation, it is important to ensure that the funding is flexible and can be used for a range of needs that may arise over time.

We urge the passage of LD 2013 as a first step to ensure that farmers have the support they need to respond to PFAS contamination on their land. The future of Maine's family farms depends on it. CLF stands ready to work with this Committee, state agencies, and other partners to help our farmers navigate this challenge.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide additional information.