

Lissa Widoff
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March 13, 2022

To: Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, and Conservation, 130th Maine State Legislature

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

Dear Senator Dill, Representative O'Neill, and honorable members of the Committee,

My name is Lissa Widoff, I live in Freedom and have spent my 40+ year career working on environmental policy, health and conservation for a variety of organizations including the state of Maine, nonprofit organizations, the federal government, private industry and in academic research. I have worked as Executive Director in a philanthropic foundation and as a consultant to others, including work on national and regional efforts to advance health protective policies relating to PFAS and its siblings, the “forever chemicals” found in a huge array of consumer products , industries and finding their way into our soils, water and bodies.

I also serve on the board of [Waldo County Bounty](#), a hunger relief organization founded at the onset of the pandemic to support growing food insecurity in Waldo County. The essence of our work is food AND farm security as we seek to support equitable access to fresh local foods while supporting a healthy and just food system. In 2021 we purchased and gleaned nearly 70,000 pounds of fresh produce for the 16 food pantries and other hunger relief organizations through our Farm to Pantry and Gleaning programs. Some of this food came from impacted farms before the contamination was known to all of us. While PFAS contamination of water supplies and health impacts from various exposure routes have long been known, the exposure pathways through agricultural lands and products is in its infancy.

I am testifying today in support of LD2013 – which will establish a **Fund to address PFAS Contamination**. At this point we are all familiar with the heart-wrenching stories of farmers whose lands are impacted by PFAS contamination, thru the legacy of state-approved sludge spreading on these agricultural lands. These impacted farms are friends and neighbors. I have baked bread with Unity’s Songbird Farm grains, eaten Ironwood Farm greens and meat from Misty Brook Farm in Albion, and have had a farm share from New Beat Farm in Knox.

We are at the tip of the iceberg in fully comprehending the economic, social impacts and health impacts of this crisis. LD2013 is an absolutely necessary critical first step to address the immediate impacts of this crisis for affected farms, families and communities. There are three crucial elements to the case for supporting this bill.

- PFAS-impacted farms are suffering through no fault of their own and the contamination has forced these farms to cease production and sale of their products. At a time of year that is usually filled with possibility, affected farmers are now facing the terror not only of loss of their livelihoods, but of their health. Farmers should not bear the cost of the impacts of a state-approved legacy of this sludge spreading.
- The Fund to address PFAS Contamination is a viable and essential step to start to address the financial impacts of this crisis. Income support for affected farms is needed immediately to help farmers pay their mortgage until next steps and strategies are known. Providing income support and possible buyout, as well as research that will help us steer towards remediation and wholeness and is the very least the state can do. Funds for farmer economic relief must be accompanied by long-term health monitoring and new business models that are also, gratefully, part of this bill.
- Waldo County, as many other rural parts of Maine, has a proud heritage of agricultural production. My town of Freedom was historically a bustling center of agricultural activity and once again is at the epicenter of thriving diversified farms that have significantly contributed to the local economy with producers, distributors and value-added products for local and regional customers and restaurants. The only way to preserve the future potential of growth in the agricultural sector in our region is to provide for expanded testing, agricultural crop research on PFAS-contaminated soils, and long-term health monitoring.

Many of us in our community are eager to help support this effort. Please vote in support of LD2013. Thank you for your attention and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lissa Widoff". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lissa Widoff

Lissa Widoff
Freedom
LD 2013

I am attaching the testimony I have already registered to present live at the hearing.
Thanks in advance.