



Maine Conservation Voters

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Testimony of Maine Conservation Voters
Supporting LD 226

An Act To Limit the Use of Hydrofluorocarbons To Fight Climate Change

Before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee

March 15, 2021

Good morning Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and esteemed members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. I am Beth Ahearn, Director of Government Affairs for Maine Conservation Voters, testifying in support of LD 226, “An Act to Limit the Use of Hydrofluorocarbons to Fight Climate Change”. At Maine Conservation Voters (MCV), we work to make conservation a political priority.

LD 226 phases out hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which are potent, short-lived climate pollutants. HFCs are part of a class of “super pollutants” that also includes methane and black carbon. While HFCs only account for a small percentage of global greenhouse gas emissions and are short-lived in the atmosphere, they are significantly more potent than carbon dioxide in terms of their ability to trap heat.

HFCs are found in air conditioners, aerosol sprays, foam insulation, solvents and flame retardants. They first came on the market in the 1990s as an alternative to ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) but unfortunately, they represent a bigger threat to our climate than the CFCs they replaced. Nationally and globally, HFCs are the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions, which could double within 20 years if we do not act soon.

This bill will replace climate warming HFCs with climate friendly alternatives, where available, beginning in 2021. Alternatives do exist, some of which are made right here in Maine. “GO Lab” is a business that is currently refurbishing a paper mill in Madison to make wood fiber insulation. Wood fiber insulation is made from the mountains of clean, residual wood chips that pile up daily at lumber mills. GO Lab takes this valuable byproduct, grinds it into wool-like fibers, adds some adhesives and presses it into innovative, highly efficient insulation.

From the Go Lab website: “...this (Madison) plant will turn daily shipments of wood chips from lumber yards around the state, into cost competitive, environmentally sustainable, transformative insulation products. Demand for our products will breathe new life into Maine’s forest products

industry and create good paying jobs that will reinvigorate local economies.” This is a win-win – replacing harmful HFC-containing insulation with a sustainable wood product.

Similar legislation is now being considered in Massachusetts and Rhode Island as well as other U.S. Climate Alliance states. Maine joined the U.S. Climate Alliance, a coalition of governors committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement. Because federal rules restricting the use of HFCs have been partly vacated by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, the 24 U.S. Climate Alliance states are taking a leadership role in the absence of national rules.

At the federal level, both Maine Senators support phasing out super pollutants. In fact, Senator Collins sponsored legislation to replace super pollutants with climate friendly alternatives in 2014 and re-introduced the “Super Pollutants Act of 2019” during the summer.

As Chairman Tucker, presenter of LD 226 stated succinctly last session, “Restricting HFCs is ‘low hanging fruit’ in our effort to slow down climate warming. Limiting HFCs will have big impact for little cost.”

Thank you to the returning committee members who cast a unanimous vote on this legislation last session. We hope you will do the same this session.

And thank you for the opportunity to testify today.