



**Testimony of the Maine Public Health Association in Support of  
L.D. 226, An Act To Limit the Use of Hydrofluorocarbons To Fight Climate Change**

Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
Room 216, Cross State Office Building  
Monday, March 15, 2021

Good morning Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Rebecca Boulos. I am a resident of South Portland and executive director of the Maine Public Health Association. I am here today in support of LD 226, “An Act To Limit the Use of Hydrofluorocarbons To Fight Climate Change.”

MPHA is the state’s oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health professionals. We represent more than 500 individual members and 30 organizations across the state. The mission of MPHA is to improve and sustain the health and well-being of all people in Maine through health promotion, disease prevention, and the advancement of health equity. As a statewide nonprofit association, we advocate, act, and advise on critical public health challenges, aiming to improve the policies, systems, and environments that underlie health inequities – but which also have potential to improve health outcomes for all people in Maine. We are not tied to a national agenda, which means we are responsive to the needs of Maine’s communities and we take that responsibility seriously.

This bill prohibits the use (including sale and production) of any product or equipment that uses or will use a substance that is a hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) with high global warming potential, specifically air conditioners, refrigerants, foams, or aerosol propellants. The bill directs the Department of Environmental Protection to adopt rules to implement the prohibition and specifies the substances and end uses to be addressed in the rules.

HFCs are potent heat-trapping gases used as refrigerants, foam-blowing agents, aerosols, propellants, and other applications. The Global Warming Potential (GWP)<sup>1</sup> of HFCs is 12,000-14,000.<sup>1</sup> According to the American Public Health Association, phasing down the production of HFCs is critical to protecting public health from the impacts of climate change. Heat-trapping pollutants, such as HFCs, are driving higher temperatures and more extreme weather, such as droughts, heat waves, and heavy rainfall. Droughts increase the risk of forest fires, and hurt farming and livestock production. Warmer temperatures and shorter winters cause ticks to come out of hibernation earlier and to [move further north](#), resulting in an increase in Lyme disease. According to the [Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#), from 2001-2018, the incidence rate of Lyme disease in Maine (per 100,000 people) increased from 8.4 to 105.1, with a peak of 138.9 in 2017. Heavy rainfall can contaminate drinking water through land runoff, and wash out roadways, making it harder for people to get medical care or travel for work.

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<sup>1</sup>The Global Warming Potential (GWP) was developed to allow comparisons of the global warming impacts of different gases. Specifically, it is a measure of how much energy the emissions of 1 ton of a gas will absorb over a given period of time, relative to the emissions of 1 ton of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). The larger the GWP, the more that a given gas warms the Earth compared to CO<sub>2</sub> over that time period. To learn more: <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/understanding-global-warming-potentials>

Additional consequences include poorer air quality, which directly affects vulnerable Mainers, such as children, the elderly, and those living with respiratory disease. According to the [American Lung Association's State of the Air Report](#) (2020), in Maine, 133,151 adults and 18,474 children have asthma.

Climate change also threatens economic growth and development. Extreme weather events and sea level rise increase social erosion, decrease shoreline, and limit real estate development and outdoor tourism, which comprises [4.8% of Maine's economy](#) – more than double the national average. To make matters worse, local governments bear the brunt of recovery efforts after extreme weather events, which strain local resources and increase the burden on taxpayers.

Climate change is a public health emergency that acts as a threat multiplier, exacerbating existing health inequities, including poverty, environmental degradation, and political instability. Like health inequities, climate change is a problem rooted in the structures, systems, and values of our society and economy. Eliminating health inequities and resolving climate change requires an intersectoral and transformational approach.<sup>1</sup>

We encourage the legislature to adopt policies that improve public health and economic security, reduce health disparities, and address human contributors to climate change. This legislation will limit the contributions of HFCs to global warming and climate change; thus, we are supportive of the efforts set forth in this bill. On behalf of Maine Public Health Association, I respectfully ask you to vote LD 226 “Ought to Pass.”

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolph, L., Harrison, C., Buckley, L. & North, S. (2018). *Climate Change, Health, and Equity: A Guide for Local Health Departments*. Oakland, CA and Washington D.C., Public Health Institute and American Public Health Association.