



Testimony of the Environmental Priorities Coalition
Supporting LD 1503

An Act To Stop Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Pollution

Before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee

May 3, 2021

Good day Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and members of the ENR Committee. My name is Beth Ahearn, Director of Government Affairs at Maine Conservation Voters and I offer testimony on behalf of the Environmental Priorities Coalition (EPC) in support of LD 1503. Thank you to Rep. Gramlich for sponsoring this important bill. The EPC is a partnership of thirty-two conservation, environmental, and public health organizations who unify around a common agenda every year. The EPC represents over 100,000 members in Maine who want to protect the good health, good jobs, and quality of life that depend upon a healthy environment. LD 1503 is priority legislation for our coalition for 2021. This legislation will protect our public health and environment by keeping a class of hazardous “forever chemicals” out of products.

Toxic PFAS are contaminating our environment and threatening public health – especially for the most vulnerable Mainers. So-called “forever chemicals,” toxic PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) pose significant health risks, particularly for pregnant women and children. They increase the risk of certain cancers, interfere with immune system responses, may lower a woman’s chance of getting pregnant, and have been associated with neurodevelopmental issues. PFAS have contaminated water and soil across the state, harming our environment and contaminating farmland and drinking water. Many PFAS do not break down and remain in the environment unless cleaned up.

Low income communities, communities of color, and tribal and rural communities are disproportionately impacted and more susceptible to health and financial impacts of PFAS contamination.

PFAS are widespread and clean-up is expensive. PFAS are used in thousands of everyday products including cookware, clothing, food packaging, textiles, and car seats. Most of these uses could be substituted for safer alternatives, although a handful of uses important to health and safety may not have an immediately available substitute.

The cost of disposal of PFAS contaminated waste is falling to municipalities, which are already facing budget shortfalls. We can break the cycle of contamination and clean-up by phasing out PFAS in consumer and industrial products.

LD 1503 addresses these problems in two important ways:

- 1) Phasing out the use of PFAS in non-essential products. It would ban the use of PFAS in residential carpets, rugs, and fabric treatments by 2023. Major manufacturers and retailers are already taking this action voluntarily. The law grants authority to the DEP to ban the use of PFAS in other categories of products where alternatives are available. Effective in 2032, the bill prohibits the sale of products containing intentionally added PFAS unless the DEP has specifically designated them as being an essential use of PFAS.

- 2) Requiring that manufacturers disclose PFAS use and pay a reporting fee. Reporting fees would fund a source-reduction program to provide technical assistance, education, and grants to publicly owned treatment works and municipalities to reduce PFAS entering the waste stream. This would both reduce contamination and put some of the cost where it belongs: on the manufacturers of the toxic products.

PFAS pose a ubiquitous problem in Maine. Please take a step towards solving the problem by voting “ought to pass” on LD 1503.