

April 29, 2021

RE: Testimony in Support of LD 1503 – An Act to Stop Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Pollution

Dear Chairs Brenner and Tucker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in Support of LD 1503 – An Act to Stop Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Pollution. My name is Jennifer Armstrong, and I am writing to you today as a concerned, small business owner, who produces products in Maine. It has been at the top of our company's priority list to only produce products that are non-toxic and non-harmful to our valued customers. I strongly believe that is the responsibility of producers to protect the citizens of our state, our country, and our world. As you all have been informed, through past testimony on PFAS, these "forever chemicals" are highly toxic, contaminate our environment, and threaten public health. Not only are PFAS highly persistent, but they are highly mobile, spread quickly, and can even be harmful at low doses.

As business owners, it may often be challenging to make innovative, responsible decisions on behalf of the public good, without solid, thoughtful legislation such as this, to illuminate alternatives to harmful, destructive practices. Much work has been done recently to develop and distribute more healthy alternatives to PFAS. The passing of this legislation would effect positive change in the production of alternative non-toxic substances through focused research and development of individual companies and entire industries.

It can be done. When we began our knitwear business, JAK Designs, over 20 years ago, we made a commitment to make socially responsible and environmentally sustainable decisions in all aspects of our business. For us, this meant choosing to use only organic and natural yarns, and trying to source supplies and materials locally, to reduce chemical use, pesticides and transportation emissions and impact. For example, because cotton production is one of the most damaging crops due to enormous pesticide use, we committed to using only organic cotton yarn, though it costs more. In the very beginning, we used a processed viscose yarn, which is a regenerated cellulose fiber. It was our best selling product, but our least safely produced yarn. We agreed to take a big risk and find a healthier alternative. I turn, we were able to source a non-toxic yarn made in the US. It is definitely a process, and every business can start protecting their customers today, with the help of legislation such as this.

I urge you to consider the present and long term effects of your support of this bold and timely legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Armstrong
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Kennebunkport, ME