

Testimony of Gail L. Carlson, Ph.D.  
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*In support of* **LD 1503** An Act To Stop Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Pollution

Before the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, Augusta, Maine (*via Zoom*)  
May 3, 2021

Representative Tucker, Senator Brenner, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for hearing my testimony. My name is Gail Carlson, I teach public health courses at Colby College, and I have conducted research on environmental PFAS contamination in Maine that has likely resulted from both global sources and local use of fluoro ski waxes, which is an example of a PFAS-containing product being phased out due to human health and environmental concerns.

Maine has a major PFAS contamination problem, and we are facing an enormous and costly cleanup burden. PFAS are highly persistent and build up in the environment and in people, with dangerous consequences for health. It is imperative that we minimize future PFAS contamination, and the best way to do that is to eliminate the **sources** of PFAS, which this bill aims to do. Maine has already taken the important step of restricting PFAS in food packaging, and now we need to take the next steps.

This bill proposes to start by prohibiting the sale of carpets and fabric treatments containing PFAS, which makes a lot of sense because we know that this is a significant exposure route for people. In one study, members of a family who had treated their home carpets with Scotchguard to confer stain resistance were found to have very high serum levels of the specific PFAS known to be in Scotchguard, and levels were highest in the youngest children.<sup>1</sup>

There are hundreds of other uses of PFAS in consumer products, building materials, industrial processes, and other sources that end up polluting human bodies and the environment, and they must be restricted in order to prevent future contamination. This bill wisely gives Maine time to participate in the identification of avoidable uses of PFAS and benefit from growing knowledge and innovation on safer non-PFAS alternatives.

A friend of mine lives in Fairfield next to fields where sludge-spreading occurred, and not only does her well water have elevated PFAS, but so does a stream that runs along the edge of her property, and **even her own blood serum**. So many people are suffering in Fairfield and other towns across Maine, and we need to make sure this doesn't happen to anybody else in the future.

Production, use and disposal of PFAS-containing products leads to contamination of soils, ground and surface waters, wastewater and sludge, and when sludge is spread on lands, PFAS are mobile in soil and water, are taken up by edible crops, livestock and other animals, and poison our food supply and drinking water. Local and global PFAS contamination also leads to significant tainting of seafood. Foods are the major exposure route for most people,<sup>2</sup> but millions also drink PFAS-laden water, and household uses of PFAS products lead to contaminated dust, which is ingested and inhaled, particularly by children.

It also rains PFAS all over the world. A new study reported high levels of many different PFAS in U.S. rainwater, including some that have been phased out and others that are newer replacements.<sup>3</sup> We cannot effectively control PFAS once they are in the environment and in our bodies, so the only way to prevent further pollution and protect our health is to **stop using PFAS**.

And we need to avoid the mistakes of the past when we simply replaced one toxic chemical with another, often from the same chemical family. Research is showing us that newer PFAS are just as dangerous as older ones. We need to accept the scientific consensus<sup>4</sup> that the entire PFAS family is hazardous and phase it out as much as is possible. We have the opportunity to take this bold and necessary step in Maine, and I urge you to vote *ought to pass* on LD1503. Thank you.

#### Sources

<sup>1</sup> <http://dx.doi.org/10.1021/es3034654>

<sup>2</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1533/9780857098917.2.279>

<sup>3</sup> <https://cen.acs.org/acs-news/acs-meeting-news/US-rainwater-contains-new-and-phased-out-PFAS/99/web/2021/04>

<sup>4</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.estlett.0c00255>