

Testimony of Lani Graham, MD, MPH  
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**IN SUPPORT OF LD 1503**

An Act To Stop Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Pollution

Presented by Representative Lori Gramlich

**Before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee: May 3, 2021**

Good morning, Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and Members of the Committee. My name is Lani Graham. I am a family practice physician and former Chief Public Health officer for Maine. Currently, I serve on the Public Health Committee for the Maine Medical Association (MMA), and from May 2019 to December 2019, I was represented the Maine Public Health Association (MPHA) working with other stakeholders on a Task Force established to make recommendations to help Maine address the serious contamination by the large chemical family known collectively as PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances). I am here in support of LD 1503 on behalf of the MMA.

Most Maine people are now aware of the terrible devastation caused by contamination of our soil and water with the huge family of chemicals we have come to know as PFAS. I have already testified on a number of bills related to this problem. The bills that I have testified on were about securing safe drinking water, giving our state the right to regulate this family of chemicals, and giving Maine people the option to sue those responsible. They were all important bills. But in many ways, LD 1503 is the most important of them all because it is the only one that has been crafted to stop the continued distribution of these chemicals into our environment. What we need to do now is to turn off the tap. Therefore LD 1503 is a critically important bill.

As health is my area of concern, I will reiterate for you that these chemicals have been linked to a relatively long list of adverse health impacts. And sadly, the research on human health effects is just beginning. We know that people in Maine, including children, have been drinking water heavily contaminated with PFAS and we can't say what that means for their future health. And of course, vegetables are being grown in contaminated soil and farms have been ruined. All of this is on-going.

Ideally it would be wonderful if we could stop the use of PFAS completely today, but we all know this is not feasible. Instead, LD 1503 proposes some simple, reasonable steps to move forward with eliminating the use of these chemicals.

First through requiring manufacturers to report use of these chemicals and pay a fee we will learn where the problems are, and the money collected will help support struggling Maine towns as they work to dispose of contaminated products.

Second, there is no reason why we can't ban the use of PFAS in non-essential products, such as dental tape, furniture, rugs, and other products that are not essential for a healthy life.

Please help us move forward with stopping PFAS contamination by supporting LD 1503. Thank you for your attention. I'd be pleased to answer any questions you might have.