



**Solutions for a
Toxic-Free Tomorrow**

Testimony of Elyse Tipton, Director of Advancement, Defend Our Health, in SUPPORT of LD 1532, “An Act to Protect Maine’s Air Quality by Strengthening Requirements for Air Emissions Licensing,” before the Joint Legislative Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources. May 3, 2021

Good Morning Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

My name is Elyse Tipton. I am director of advancement for Defend Our Health—the nearly 20-year-old Maine-based organization known until last fall as the Environmental Health Strategy Center. Our work protects children and families from the harms of unnecessary and unjust toxic chemical exposure that we humans are exposed to through sources including food, drinking water, products in our homes, and contaminated air.

I also am a resident of South Portland, and, like you, I’m an elected official: I serve as vice chair of the South Portland Board of Education.

My work with a public health organization, my residence near a tank-farm facility in South Portland, and my concern about the students in our city—give me a reason to testify in support of the bill that Representative Morales is sponsoring, LD 1532, “An Act to Protect Maine’s Air Quality by Strengthening Requirements for Air Emissions Licensing.”

It makes sense for the Maine Department of Environmental Protection to determine a facility’s air emission permit limit for hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) within one mile of homes, schools, daycares, senior housing, and

playing fields in bordering neighborhoods. Our DEP can protect the health of some of our community's most vulnerable residents.

The so-called "tank farm" facilities in South Portland are a source of numerous, well-founded concerns about the health and safety of my community—a beautiful Maine coastal city of 25,000 increasingly diverse numbers of people living in the easternmost oil port in the country.

As we began learning more than two years ago, oil tank owners have violated safety regulations for allowable levels of toxic emissions from their tank farms, including the permitted limit of volatile organic compounds.

Some of the groups most vulnerable to these toxic chemicals are pregnant women, babies, and young children. South Portland parents are deeply concerned about their children's health. Toxic chemical exposure threatens children's developing bodies and brains with health harms that can have lifelong impact, including learning disabilities that represent substantial costs for school districts such as South Portland.

Defend Our Health is also especially mindful of another vulnerable group—children and families who face environmental injustice. In this case, these are the residents of several South Portland neighborhoods who may be unfairly and disproportionately exposed to toxic chemicals because where they live happens to be where the global businesses that own and profit from the oil-tank farms are failing to safeguard human health.

It is vital that Maine's DEP be tasked with determining and setting emissions limits that are health protective, and that the facility owners are charged with regularly demonstrating and reporting compliance.

Defend Our Health urges the committee to fully support the concepts of LD 1532. And I, personally, ask you to do all you can to make sure that South Portland's families and students are not harmed.

Thank you.