



**Testimony of Sharon Treat, Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy
In Support of LD 1503, “An Act to Stop Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Pollution”
Environmental and Natural Resources Committee
May 3, 2021**

Good morning Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and honorable members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Sharon Treat and I live in Hallowell. I am Senior Attorney for the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP), on whose behalf I am testifying today in support of LD 1503, “An Act to Stop Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Pollution”.

IATP is a nonprofit headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota with offices in Hallowell, Maine and other locations.¹ We work closely with farmers to promote local, sustainable and environmentally beneficial agriculture and trade. For the past two years, as PFAS has increasingly been found to have contaminated food and farms, we have been advocating for measures to investigate and remediate PFAS. Equally important is to “turn off the tap” to stop PFAS at the source and hold manufacturers accountable.

LD 1503 is important legislation that takes a reasoned, deliberate and science-supported approach to phasing out the use of Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances in products where that use is not essential for health, safety or the functioning of society and for which alternatives are not reasonably available. This approach is based on the example of the Montreal Protocol, which phased out the use of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons except for certain ‘essential’ uses, and which defined the concept of ‘essential use’ in Decision IV/25.19.²

By focusing the ban in the first instance on carpets and fabric, the legislation targets products where PFAS is known to be present and for which there are safe alternatives. The legislation phases in the ban on PFAS in other products through a rulemaking process, prioritizing those products most likely to cause contamination of land or water resources.

The notification and disclosure provisions, requiring manufacturers to disclose the presence and amount of PFAS in their products, are necessary to ensure compliance, and are also critical to reducing this pollutant at the source. You can’t prevent contamination and identify potential sources

¹ IATP also has offices in Washington, D.C. and Berlin, Germany (IATP Europe). For over 30 years, IATP has provided research, analysis and advocacy on a wide range of agriculture-related issues including farm to school; climate; agroecology; soil health and water quality and access; farmworker health and economic security; and trade and market policies. For more information, see www.iatp.org.

² The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, <https://ozone.unep.org/treaties/montreal-protocol/montreal-protocol-substances-deplete-ozone-layer>. The two elements of an essential use are that a use is “necessary for health, safety or is critical for the functioning of society” and that “there are no available technically and economically feasible alternatives.” See discussion in “The concept of essential use for determining when uses of PFASs can be phased out,” *Environ. Sci.: Processes Impacts*, 2019,21, 1803-1815, <https://doi.org/10.1039/C9EM00163H>

of pollution if you don't know where it is, and as a consumer, you can't avoid PFAS-containing products unless the manufacturer reveals that information. LD 1503 also has important provisions intended to provide educational and financial support to Maine municipalities and treatment works to reduce PFAS at the source. This program should be funded with fees on manufacturers authorized in the bill. To date Maine taxpayers and ratepayers of publicly owned treatment works and water utilities have borne the brunt of the costs of this extraordinarily pervasive contaminant. It is time for manufacturers to start paying for the costs of their pollution, and help transition to a PFAS-free future.

We need not repeat here the extensive evidence of existing PFAS contamination of Maine's soil and waters in [data](#) being collected by Maine DEP, most recently for drinking water wells in the [Fairfield](#) area.³ This committee has also previously heard from doctors, public health professionals, and scientists studying PFAS, about the unique qualities of these chemicals which mean they travel great distances in groundwater, persist almost indefinitely, and bioaccumulate up the food chain and in people. PFAS are contaminating our food, from beef and dairy to leafy vegetables.

Exposure to PFAS is a health threat. Health problems linked to PFAS include kidney and testicular cancer, thyroid disease, infertility and compromised immune systems -- which means PFAS exposure can make people more susceptible to COVID-19 health consequences and may limit the effectiveness of vaccines. Indeed, recent research has found a strong association with PFAS exposure and COVID-19 severity, antibody response, and asthma.⁴ COVID-19 affects the functioning of the lungs, where in severe cases, the lungs will inflame making it hard to breathe, potentially causing pneumonia. The positive association of PFBA concentration and COVID-19 severity suggests that PFBA could be heightening the damage to the lungs from COVID-19. Research is also suggestive that PFAS exposure reduces the antibody response for certain illnesses, raising concerns that PFAS may negatively affect the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccines. In general, elevated PFAS exposure is associated with lower antibody responses to vaccinations in children and adults.⁵

We your urge your unanimous support for LD 1503. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Anglin Treat
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

³ See, e.g. "MAINE PFAS DATA (2007 - 2020)," <https://www.maine.gov/dep/spills/topics/pfas/PFAS-current-results-06022020.pdf> and Fairfield, ME- PFAS investigation interactive map,

Investigation <https://maine.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=2bb04142294948458c81b2ece1011c88>

⁴ Grandjean, P., Timmermann, C., Kruse, M., Nielsen, F., Vinholt, P., Boding, L., Heilmann, C. and Molbak, K., 2020. Severity of COVID-19 at elevated exposure to perfluorinated alkylates, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7605584/>. In one study, Pentafluorobenzoic acid (PFBA) -- one of several thousand compounds in the PFAS class of chemicals -- detected in plasma showed strong association with the severity of COVID-19. In tissue samples from autopsies, PFBA accumulated in the lungs.

⁵ The doubling of prenatal PFAS concentration was associated with a substantial decrease in antibody concentrations of diphtheria, a bacterial infection (Grandjean et al., 2012). Another study found a negative relationship between PFAS concentrations at delivery and children's anti-rubella antibody at three years of age (Granum et al., 2013).

Hallowell, Maine
streat@iatp.org