



**Testimony of Sharon Treat, Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy
In Support of LD 1600, “An Act To Investigate Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substance Contamination
of Land and Groundwater”
Environmental and Natural Resources Committee
May 7, 2021**

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 1600, “An Act To Investigate Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substance Contamination of Land and Groundwater”.

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. As PFAS has increasingly been found to have contaminated food and farms, we have advocated for measures to investigate and remediate PFAS, as well as “turn off the tap” to stop PFAS at the source, and hold manufacturers accountable for the damage caused by PFAS manufacture and use.

LD 1600 is an important measure to address the PFAS crisis. Like the rest of the country, Maine allowed and even encouraged land disposal of sewage and industrial sludges, so-called “biosolids,” and composted waste. At last count, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has identified over 700 locations, much of it farmland, where sludge and septage was spread over the past 40 years. State-ordered testing in 2019 revealed nearly all sewage sludge used as fertilizer or for compost in Maine is contaminated with toxic PFAS. Only a handful properties where sewage and other sludges were spread have been tested. Almost no septage has been tested; initial results show that septage could be as significant a source of contamination as sewage wastes.

LD 1600 establishes a timetable and criteria for prioritizing testing of these legacy sludge and septage spreading sites, which is absolutely essential in order to protect public health, and the integrity and healthfulness of our food system, water and soils. The experience to date has made clear that even if Maine halted all use of PFAS today, the state faces an ongoing contamination problem that reaches back decades. Known PFAS contamination of Maine’s soil and waters in [data](#) being collected by Maine DEP, most recently for

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.

drinking water wells in the [Fairfield](#) area,² show levels of PFAS that are astronomical, some of the highest recorded in North America so far. PFAS contamination of both the Tozier Farm in Fairfield and the Stoneridge Farm in Arundel has shut down those farms, destroying livelihoods. Farmers and their neighbors have PFAS in their blood, and decades of health problems may be linked to PFAS, which has been associated with kidney and testicular cancer, as well as thyroid disease, compromised immune systems and infertility. Elevated PFAS exposure is also associated with lower antibody responses to vaccinations in children and adults, including COVID-19 vaccines.

The discovery of PFAS contamination at the Stoneridge Farm only came about because the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a program to test drinking water systems for currently unregulated chemicals, and included PFAS in the suite of chemicals to be tested in 2016. The Kennebunk, Kennebunkport and Wells Water District voluntarily participated in that program, leading to the [discovery of contamination](#) in a district well and subsequently at the neighboring farm. If the water district and farmer Fred Stone had not agreed to that voluntary testing, no one would have known that drinking water and milk was contaminated.

Similarly, the massive Fairfield pollution was discovered only after tested milk was traced back to the source, not because there was any inkling that groundwater in the area was contaminated. Currently, there is no systematic testing of historic sewage and septage sites, yet we know from both the Fairfield and Arundel situations that today's contamination is likely caused by sludge that was applied to land 15 or 20 years ago, or even before.

PFAS are especially persistent in the environment – they don't break down and can bioaccumulate in both humans and farm animals. These chemicals are also extremely mobile, easily traveling through soils and groundwater far from the initial location of contamination, and they can break down in ways that essentially create ongoing new sources of PFAS. They are called “forever chemicals” for a reason, and it is extremely likely that water, food and farm contamination extends well beyond the Fairfield and Arundel locations.

LD 1600 creates a funding mechanism and a process for systematically investigating groundwater contamination caused by sewage, septage and industrial sludge spreading, focused first on sites where human health impacts are most likely. It is imperative to pass this legislation and we urge your unanimous support. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,
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² 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>