



Community Action Works Campaigns

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Good Morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Dana Colihan, and I am the Maine State Director for Community Action Works Campaigns, formerly Toxics Action Center. I am here to testify neither for nor against LD 129 and LD 164. While LD164 would set a drinking water standard more aligned with other New England states, we want it to be stronger. Mainers hold ourselves to high standards, and we deserve the strongest PFAS standards in the nation. I urge the Committee to take more meaningful action by setting a PFAS drinking water standard of Zero ppt on all PFAS. Today, I am honored to stand side by side with residents we've worked with in Fairfield, Lewiston, and Corinna, who are experiencing the catastrophic impacts of PFAS contamination.

At Community Action Works Campaigns, we believe that environmental threats are big, but the power of well-organized community groups is bigger. That's why we work side by side with everyday people to confront those who are polluting and harming the health of our communities. We partner with the people who are most impacted by environmental problems, training them with the know-how anyone would need to make change in their own backyard--and nowhere has that been more important over the past few years than in communities affected by PFAS.

At Community Action Works Campaigns, we envision a toxic-free world where we phase out harmful chemicals from manufacturing, and where we do everything possible to clean up the toxic legacies of past mistakes. We began working on the ground with residents impacted by PFAS contamination in Bennington, Vermont in February 2016 after one resident's drinking water well came back hundreds of times above the state's limit. After supporting community members in Bennington to organize for clean PFAS-free water and health protections, we formed the National PFAS Contamination Coalition in order to assist communities in creating state and national campaigns to protect our water, environment, and health from PFAS contamination.

From this experience as well as working side by side with the Phinney Road Landfill Coalition for Clean Water experiencing PFAS contamination from a leaking landfill in Corinna to the Fairfield Water Concerned Citizens, where some residents are experiencing contamination at tens of thousands of parts per trillion, we have seen first hand the toll these chemicals take on our health and the environment.

Given the grave health consequences of these chemicals, why would we allow any PFAS in our drinking water? Why wouldn't we adhere to the strictest standards of testing and evaluation?

WE NEED STRONG STANDARDS:

Setting an interim MCL for 20ppt for but 70 ppt for other chemicals is *unconscionable* considering that this standard is nowhere near protective of our most vulnerable populations, and considering that our neighboring states have already set much stronger standards. Setting a drinking water standard of 20ppt for 6 PFAS would be more in line with other states in the Northeast. However, there are over 8,000 PFAS chemicals in production, still largely unregulated in use, commerce, disposal, and in our drinking water. More and more scientists are raising the alarm that there is *no safe level* of PFAS in our water.¹ There are currently families in Fairfield whose well-water is being tested, who are discovering that their water is contaminated with these toxic-forever chemicals linked to serious health effects across the board like testicular and kidney cancer, liver malfunction, thyroid disease, and birth abnormalities.² But some of these families are being told that they can't get filtration systems because their contamination for distinct PFAS chemicals is lower than 70 ppts. However, we know that these chemicals don't act distinctly, but have a cumulative impact on our bodies.³ This is why we're calling for a drinking water standard of zero ppt for total PFAS. This would be the most health protective for communities across the state.

WE NEED STRONG TESTING REQUIREMENTS and METHODS:

Maine's new drinking water standard needs to require testing of drinking water systems like is being called for in LD 129. We also need to make sure that labs can test as low as possible (at least 2ppt), to include detections under the detection limit (rather than just saying "non detect" and treating it as a 0), and for as many PFAS as possible (we recommend the new EPA testing method 537.1) until there is approved total PFAS testing. I know I wouldn't feel safe drinking 65 parts per trillion. I don't want any PFAS in my water. Do you? We need strong PFAS testing methods to make sure we keep our communities safe.

In summary, we applaud your efforts to protect the public from the horrible health implications of ingesting PFAS, and

- 20ppt for 6 PFAS is strong, but we need zero ppt for total PFAS
- Communities should test using method 537.1
- Labs should test to maximum 2 ppt to ensure they're not missing the cumulative limit

Not addressed in these regulations but also critically important: we urge the Mills Administration to take other actions to protect the public from the dangers of PFAS chemicals. We need financial support for cities and towns who will have to pass on the

¹ <https://theintercept.com/2019/06/18/pfoa-pfas-teflon-epa-limit/>

² <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/basic-information-pfas>

³ https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/materials/perfluoroalkyl_and_polyfluoroalkyl_substances_508.pdf

costs of water monitoring and treatment onto families through increased water bills. We need to make polluters pay. We hope the Attorney General and the State of Maine will explore legal options to force the manufacturers of these chemicals who have profited off their use for decades to pay for cleanup of the contamination they have caused. More also needs to happen to support private well owners to monitor and address contamination of private drinking water sources. Finally, we need to prevent future contamination by phasing out these chemicals from manufacturing, and turning off the tap by banning the spreading of sludge.

Thank you for your work to create strong PFAS standards to protect the health of Mainers and hearing our concerns. We hope that you will take the aggressive action needed to eliminate our exposure to these chemicals and protect our communities by passing a stronger MCL of 0 ppt for total PFAS. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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