



MAINE RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION

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To: Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Bradley Sawyer, Director of Government Affairs, MRWA

Date: February 9, 2021

Re: Testimony in Support of L.D. 129 and in Opposition to L.D. 164

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today in support of L.D. 129 and in opposition to L.D. 164. My name is Brad Sawyer, and I am the Director of Government Affairs for the Maine Rural Water Association.

The water industry in Maine is acutely aware of the growing desire to test for, and regulate, per and polyfluoroalkyl substances. As professionals dedicated to ensuring clean and safe drinking water, we support the concept but urge extreme caution in the steps taken to do so. We understand that these chemical compounds can cause harm, but we do not yet have established science that can prove to what degree and at what levels. It is for this reason, and others stated below that we urge the state to take a measured look at what responsible regulations looks like.

L.D. 129, while still exposing utilities to almost immediate financial commitments, directs the Department of Health and Human Services to undertake a rulemaking process that must be completed under current guidelines. This process will allow for the best current science to be gathered, a robust stakeholder process to take place, a consideration of financial impacts on Mainers, and ultimately a thorough review of the facts to be used in setting a brand-new maximum contaminant level.

L.D. 164 does not involve that process. It sets standards that may feel good but ultimately could cause more harm than good. Unnecessary low MCL's will cause excessive spending by water utilities that will disproportionately hurt rural and lower-income residents, who on average pay a higher percentage of their income on water service than their urban and middle-to-upper class neighbors do. Once a limit is set it becomes quite difficult, from a political standpoint, to raise it, even if there is evidence to support the new proposed limit would be safe for humans and the environment.

Treatment for PFAS is extremely expensive and when consumer owned utilities are forced to foot that bill without any help from the state or federal government, they have no choice but to pass that cost onto their ratepayers. Make no mistake, these bills may not have fiscal notes on them, but they will cause your constituents to pay higher bills. We urge the Legislature to take a comprehensive look at the issue of PFAS in every bill that is considered and if you believe it worth regulating, we ask that you consider financial support to the entities that undertake that work.

We are pleased to see the Department of Health and Human Services put in L.D. 129 to take a holistic look at the issue and hope the committee will support their efforts in doing so. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at Bradley.Sawyer@MaineRWA.org of 207-737-9014.