



Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

Common Ground Country Fair

February 9, 2021

Good morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Heather Spalding and I'm deputy director of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA).

My testimony relates to two bills: LD 129 - *Resolve, To Protect Consumers of Public Drinking Water by Establishing Maximum Contaminant Levels for Certain Substances and Contaminants* and LD 164 - *An Act To Establish Maximum Contaminant Levels under the State's Drinking Water Rules for Certain Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances*. We appreciate the discussion about these bills and are generally supportive though we want to ensure that maximum contamination levels are relevant and in line with new science, and we want to ensure that testing happens in all public and private drinking water sources in the state.

We want to thank you for your attention to this matter that seems to grow more dire by the week. We thank Representative Tucker for his leadership. We also commend Governor Mills for convening the PFAS task force, as well as the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry and the Department of Environmental Protection for proactive efforts to assess the scope of the contamination in Maine and to advocate for coordinated action at the federal level as well. As Maine works to gather information about the extent of PFAS contamination, it is essential to turn off the tap, protect the health of Maine citizens, and hold the manufacturers of these toxic forever chemicals accountable for ever allowing the materials to come to market.

MOFGA has members thousands of homes across the state – in rural, suburban and urban areas. Healthy soil, water and air are top priorities for our members. All of them are vulnerable to the impact of PFAS, and we're growing more concerned about the specific threat of PFAS-contaminated drinking water and groundwater. PFAS threatens the health of Maine people as well as Maine's rural economy.

A senior official at the Centers for Disease Control said that PFAS presents "one of the most seminal public health challenges for the next decades." PFAS health risks include problems with neurological development, lowered fertility in men and women, liver disorders, endocrine system disruption, birth defects, testicular and prostate cancer. More recently, and understandably, there has been increasing concern about the impact that PFAS chemicals have on the efficacy of vaccinations.

Science has established that we all carry a body burden of phthalates and PFAS. In 2014, MOFGA helped organize a study entitled, *Hormones Disrupted: Toxic Phthalates In Maine People*. I was one of the participants in the study and was in the top 25% of U.S. exposure for two phthalates – DEHP (Di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate) and DIDP (Diisodecyl phthalate). I didn't ask for these chemicals to contaminate my body and I certainly didn't want to pass them along

to my children. Now we are learning that PFAS adds to the toxic cocktail poisoning our bodies.

We also know that PFAS has contaminated wells from Aroostook County to York County. We hope you will set a maximum contamination level of 20 parts per trillion and require testing for all public and private drinking water sources in Maine. We urge you to establish a maximum contamination level of 20 parts per trillion, which is in line with levels established in Vermont and Massachusetts. The Environmental Protection Agency's advisory level of 70 ppt is inadequate to protect the health of Maine people. Other agencies within the federal government, including the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, part of the Centers for Disease Control, and the Director of the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences have recommended lower safety thresholds for PFAS.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) started in 1971 and is the oldest and largest state organic organization in the country. We're a broad-based community that educates about and advocates for organic agriculture, illuminating its interdependence with a healthy environment, local food production, and thriving communities. We're a statewide organization that has experienced significant growth over the past couple of decades. We have 11,000 members, we certify 562 organic farms and processing facilities representing \$90 million in sales, and we are working hard to provide training and create opportunities for Maine's next generation of farmers. Each of these farmers is a Maine businessperson for whom economic health and environmental health are interdependent. While MOFGA envisions a future of healthy ecosystems, communities, people and economies sustained by the practices of organic agriculture, we attribute our success to collaboration and outreach to growers across the management spectrum.