



Solutions for a  
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Director of Advocacy, Defend Our Health  
Neither for nor Against LD 129, “An Act To Establish Maximum Contaminant Levels under the  
State’s Drinking Water Rules for Certain Perflouroalkyl and  
Polyflouroalkyl Substances”  
Before the Health and Human Services Committee  
February 9, 2021

Good Morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the director of advocacy for Defend Our Health, formerly the Environmental Health Strategy Center. Defend Our Health’s mission is to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food and drinking water, healthy homes and products that are toxic-free and climate friendly. I am here to testify neither for nor against LD 129, “Resolve, To Protect Consumers of Public Drinking Water by Establishing Maximum Contaminant Levels for Certain Substances and Contaminants”

Nearly every person in the US – from newborns to seniors – have the toxic chemicals PFAS in their blood. PFAS are persistent chemicals that do not break down and can remain in your system for years. PFAS have been linked to interference with normal brain development in children, they can increase the risk of some cancers, may lower a woman’s chance of getting pregnant, and have been associated with liver problems and increased cholesterol levels.

The issue of PFAS contamination across the state of Maine is a growing problem. We have seen farms destroyed<sup>1</sup>, and both public water systems and residential wells contaminated. More than 29 wells in Fairfield<sup>2</sup> are contaminated and, according to remarks Acting Commissioner Melanie Loyzim made to the Environment and Natural Resources during the supplemental budget hearing, they have just received testing results that indicate that number will rise. Those numbers are in addition to previously reported contamination of wells in Presque Isle and Trenton, as well as of the public supply from the Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, and Wells Water District<sup>3</sup>. We need to take immediate action to test public water systems and set a science-based, health-protective maximum contaminant level for PFAS in drinking water. We

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<sup>1</sup> Bever, F. (2020, July 26). State finds high level of ‘forever chemicals’ on central Maine dairy farm. *Maine Public Radio*. Retrieved February 8, 2021, from <https://bangordailynews.com/2020/07/26/news/state-finds-high-level-of-forever-chemicals-on-central-maine-dairy-farm/>

<sup>2</sup> Leigh, V. (2021, January 15). More Wells near Fairfield dairy farm tainted with 'FOREVER chemicals'. Retrieved February 08, 2021, from <https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/tech/science/environment/pfas/worried-about-health-impacts-from-pfas-some-residents-are-considering-a-legal-action/97-a635a91e-16e8-499b-a774-3e9969a8bc90>

<sup>3</sup> Water district took well offline after detecting contaminants, superintendent says. (2018, January 19). *Bangor Daily News*. Retrieved February 8, 2021, from <https://bangordailynews.com/2018/01/19/news/water-district-took-well-offline-after-discovering-contaminants-official-says/>



are in favor of the language in this bill that would require testing of all community and non-community, non-transient water systems.

Unfortunately, while this bill does require the necessary testing, as it is currently drafted, it does not set a health protective standard for PFAS in drinking water. There is currently no federal standard for PFAS in drinking water. Instead, the EPA uses an outdated 70 ppt standard. Maine has been using this outdated standard, which leading health scientists agree is not health protective. It is particularly worth noting that scientists are discovering harm to the immune system, including decreased response to vaccines, associated with lower levels. Even other agencies within the federal government, including the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry<sup>4</sup>, part of the CDC, and the Director of the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences has recommended lower safety thresholds for PFAS<sup>5</sup>.

Maine is an outlier in using the outdated EPA standard. Our northern New England neighbors have all set more health-protective standards. Our neighbors in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts have in recent years adopted standards up to ten times lower than the EPA level. Drinking water that would be considered safe to drink here in Maine would be considered toxic in these states. Mainers should not be drinking water that would be considered toxic in neighboring states. And, it's not just states in New England that are taking action. Other states including Michigan, New Jersey and California have also set more health protective standards.

We understand that the Department is offering an amendment to their bill that would set an MCL for 20 ppt for both PFOA and PFOS and continuing the rulemaking process for the other three PFAS mentioned in the bill. We appreciate setting the standards at 20 ppt for PFOA and PFOS but do not agree with initiating rulemaking on the other three. This continues to make Maine an outlier on this issue. Once again, water that is considered toxic in our neighboring states should not be considered safe here in Maine. The science is clear. Maine needs to take action to protect children and families from toxic PFAS in drinking water.

Defend Our Health supports the legislation as amended.

Thank you for your time.

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<sup>4</sup> Toxic substances portal - perfluoroalkyls. (2018, June). Retrieved February 08, 2021, from <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/ToxProfiles/tp.asp?id=1117&tid=237>

<sup>5</sup> Lerner, S. (2019, June 18). Teflon toxin safety level should be 700 times lower than current EPA Guideline. Retrieved February 08, 2021, from <https://theintercept.com/2019/06/18/pfoa-pfas-teflon-epa-limit/>