

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Director of Advocacy, Defend Our Health
In Support of LD 958 “An Act to Expand Protections to Maine's Loons from Lead Poisoning by
Prohibiting the Sale and Use of Certain Painted Lead Jigs”
Before the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee
May 8, 2023

Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the director of advocacy for Defend Our Health. 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 in support of LD 958 “An Act to Expand Protections to Maine's Loons from Lead Poisoning by Prohibiting the Sale and Use of Certain Painted Lead Jigs”.

LD 958 makes it illegal to sell or offer for sale painted lead jigs weighing one ounce or less or measuring 2 1/2 inches or less in length beginning September 1, 2024, and illegal to use them beginning September 1, 2026.

While the focus on LD 958 is to protect loons from being poisoned by painted lead jigs, LD 958 will also protect humans from lead exposure, in particular children. There is no safe level of lead for children. A potent neurotoxin, childhood lead exposure is strongly linked to lower IQ scores and worse educational outcomes. It is well documented that exposure to lead can seriously harm a child’s health and cause health effects including damage to the brain and nervous system, slowed growth and development, learning and behavior problems, and hearing and speech problems. Children under the age of 6 are at greatest risk for health problems caused by lead exposure. The health effects of lead exposure are more harmful to younger children than older children and adults because their bodies are still developing, and they are growing so rapidly. Young children also tend to put their hands or other objects, which may be contaminated with lead dust, into their mouths. Hobbies such as fishing with lead jigs can cause you to bring lead into your home via your clothes or hands. While hopefully children aren’t putting lead jigs in their mouth, the paint can chip off and get on their hands or, if contamination has gotten into your house and the dust is in your home, it could end up in their mouths. In fact, the California EPA published an interpretive guideline under Prop 65 in 2008 reporting “Lead transferred from fishing tackle to the hands during fishing and is therefore expected to result in incidental ingestion of lead through hand-to-mouth transfer.”¹

¹ California Environmental Protection Agency. (2008, March). *Guideline for Hand-to-Mouth Transfer of Lead through Exposure to Fishing Tackle Products*. State of California. Retrieved May 6, 2023, from <https://oehha.ca.gov/media/downloads/crn/r/h2mfinal031408.pdf>



While we recognize that lead jigs are not a major source of lead contamination, they are still a source and we should do everything we can to protect children from any lead exposure, no matter how small. There are available alternatives for lead jigs. That combined with the environmental and public health benefits of moving away from lead jigs would make the passage of this law a benefit to Mainers. Therefore, we urge the committee to vote “ought to pass” on LD 958.