

Testimony of Lani Graham, MD, MPH  
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**IN SUPPORT OF LD 1891**

**An Act To Continue Supporting Safe Drinking Water for Maine Families**

Presented by Representative Jessica Fay

**Before the Labor and Housing Committee:**

Good morning, Senator Daughtry, who is my own Senator, Representative Sylvester, and Members of the Committee. My name is Lani Graham. I am a family practice physician and former Chief Public Health officer for Maine. Currently, I serve on the Public Health Committee for the Maine Medical Association (MMA) and I am here in support of this bill.

As my area of expertise is health, I want to briefly mention that Arsenic is a naturally occurring element that, like several other members of the periodic table, notably lead and mercury, is associated with a number of adverse health effects, including bladder, skin and lung cancer, adverse impacts on intelligence, cardiovascular disease and even Diabetes.

Over the last several years I have been very involved in the contamination of Maine by the chemical family known as PFAS (perfluoroalkyl substances). And indeed, this is a very serious problem though some would argue that PFAS contamination is not more serious than Arsenic contamination of Maine well water, as Arsenic is more widespread.

People on public water supplies do not need to worry as public water supplies must conform to strict safety standards. But the rural nature of this state has led to the fact that more than 50% of Maine people are not on public water and instead get their water from private wells. For these people, including myself, unless a decision is made to test your well water, you may not know of the contamination. In my case I have

had my well water tested for many different contaminants, found some contaminants, and had the resources to make this testing and remediation possible. But about 70,000 Mainers live below the poverty level and are not so lucky. Access to safe drinking water should not depend on your income. Safe drinking water is the very essence of public health. But in Maine safe drinking water does depend on income and as a result low-income communities, rural Mainers, communities of color are disproportionately affected.

In 2017 a bill was passed to support testing and remediation of private wells for eligible Mainers. The program has been very successful resulting in more and more Mainers having safe drinking water. But now the funding is running out.

I urge this committee to support funding for safe drinking water for Maine families. Thank you for your attention. I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.