

Senate Finance Committee

Deb Martone 271-4980

SB 138-FN-A, making an appropriation to PFAS remediation fund grants.

Hearing Date: February 7, 2023

Time Opened: 2:09 p.m.

Time Closed: 2:23 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Gray, Innis, Bradley, Birdsell, Pearl and Rosenwald

Member of the Committee Absent: Senator D'Allesandro

Bill Analysis: This bill makes an appropriation to the department of environmental services to fund PFAS fund grants.

Sponsors:

Sen. Ricciardi

Sen. Watters

Sen. Bradley

Sen. Carson

Rep. Rhodes

Rep. B. Boyd

Rep. N. Murphy

Rep. Notter

Rep. Mooney

Who supports the bill: Senators Ricciardi, Watters and Carson; Representative Bill Boyd; Boyd Smith; Katherine Heck; Alex Koutroubas; Bill Hounsell; Shaun Mulholland; Mary Till; Susan Richman.

Who is neutral on the bill: Michael Wimsatt

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Senator Ricciardi, Prime Sponsor:

- Senator Ricciardi filed SB 138-FN-A as a means to address PFAS contamination issues by creating two \$5 million appropriations to the PFAS remediation loan fund.
- Safe, clean, drinking water is vital to all humanity.
- Senator Ricciardi related her personal experience with a sodium-contaminated well with committee members. Since that time she has concentrated on clean, safe, drinking water, and the need for individuals to own and protect the sources of their water.
- Senator Ricciardi is committed to see the proper infrastructure in place, in an affordable way.
- This is more important now than ever. Communities across the state have been impacted by PFAS contamination and largely through no fault of their own.
- The PFAS revolving loan fund has already provided in excess of \$35 million for nearly 30 projects across the state. To enable support for communities still

dealing with PFAS contamination, we need to replenish that fund. SB 138-FN-A does just that by dedicating \$10 million to the PFAS remediation loan fund over the next two years. This would allow the program to accept new applications from communities in need.

Boyd Smith, President/CEO, NH Water Works Association:

- We know how widespread PFAS contamination is.
- Private well owners have a real tough time trying to find the money to deal with the contamination. Having money that is designed to help the private sector is a good thing.
- DES has a well established track record for handling PFAS contamination.
- This is money well spent in a successful program.

Katherine Heck, New Hampshire Municipal Association:

- Ms. Heck shared a story with committee members about the Merrimack Village Water District, the largest one in the state with approximately 7,000 connections. They are receiving settlement money from Saint Gobain, but have been forced to undertake a \$14 million project in addition to that, to be able to remediate the PFAS contamination. These dollars are truly worth it to obtain safe, clean drinking water in an affordable way to the taxpayers and the ratepayers of the Merrimack Village system. Without the loan/grants this would have been unaffordable for them, even with the Saint Gobain settlement.

Bill Hounsell, Policy Analyst, Granite State Rural Water Association:

- Mr. Hounsell also represents North Conway Water Precinct and Lower Bartlett Water Precinct.
- This is a good program to take care of wells that are contaminated.
- Should a pipeline be taken from an adjacent community or rehab all the different wells one-on-one?
- Water and wastewater are one and the same; it's a circle. Water into the house; water out of the house. It can't be brought back into the house if it isn't purified.
- These funds add affordability to the municipal bonds that have to be passed to do anything. This program is the key to it all. We can't make municipalities pass bonds. It is in the state's interest and the municipalities' interest to pass the bonds.
- It's important to move this money to where it's needed as quickly as possible, and to think long-term how we can keep funding the program.

Neutral Information Presented:

Mike Wimsatt, Director, Waste Management Division, Department of Environmental Services:

- DES supports the mission of the PFAS remediation loan fund, which it administers. That mission is to assist municipalities, community water systems, and private well users to address PFAS contamination in drinking water.
- The department does not take a specific position on the appropriation or the source of funds associated with the appropriation.

- Since the discovery of widespread contamination across southern New Hampshire in 2016, the state has directed many resources in understanding this problem and attempting to assist municipalities, community water systems, and private well users to address PFAS contamination and avoid exposure to contaminants.
- The PFAS remediation loan fund has been a vital component of that effort. The fund was originally established as a loan fund. Its scope was then expanded to include making grants and rebates. The grants are largely directed to public community water systems. The rebate program specifically assists private well users who don't have the opportunity to connect to a public water system for treatment to their wells to address PFAS contamination. They can apply for a rebate and if eligible receive one to offset the cost of the treatment.
- This program is very highly subscribed. They've received approximately \$55 million from a number of sources. This money has been appropriated for the grants and rebates. All the grant money is spoken for; what remains has been allocated and dedicated to the rebate program.
- Unfortunately, no fund applications are being accepted currently. The demand is and will continue to be very great. Most of the demand will lie with public water systems and community water systems to address PFAS contamination to treat the water to meet current standards.
- DES anticipates the EPA may be proposing a new PFAS drinking water standard. To the extent the standard is any lower than the one they currently enforce at the state level, they would be expected to adopt such a standard.
- Senator Rosenwald questioned the appropriations in the bill with no nonlapsing language. Melissa Rollins, Legislative Budget Analyst explained the PFAS remediation loan fund itself is nonlapsing. No correction to the bill is required.

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Date Hearing Report completed: February 10, 2023