

**Testimony of Senator Susan M. Collins**  
**Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works**  
**Hearing on Air Monitoring Legislation**  
**July 13, 2022**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Capito, I want to begin by thanking you for holding today's hearing, and also say what a pleasure it is to share the witness table with my friend from the House, Representative Lisa Blunt of Rochester. It's great to have you over on the Senate side.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify about the Comprehensive National Mercury Monitoring Act, which I have introduced with the distinguished Chairman. Chairman Carper mentioned in his opening comments that this is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Clean Air Act, and it is a point of pride for me that that landmark law was authored by Maine Senator Edmund Muskie, and earlier this summer I participated in an event in Senator Muskie's hometown of Rumford, with his son, Ned Muskie, where we commemorated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Clean Air Act. So your hearing is particularly timely. Our bipartisan mercury monitoring bill would help ensure that we have accurate, scientifically-based data about mercury pollution in our country.

As this committee well knows, mercury is a potent neurotoxin. Exposure can lead to significant health problems, especially in children and pregnant women. Mercury exposure has gone down as U.S. mercury emissions have declined; however, levels remain unacceptably high, and in some cases we really don't know how much mercury is in our environment.

In Maine, some of our lands and bodies of water face higher mercury pollution compared to the national average. That's because of Maine's location. It's sometimes called the "tailpipe of the nation." And it's the same concept that the winds from the west are blowing pollution into the pristine air of my beautiful state.

A system for collecting information, such as we have already for acid rain and other pollution, does not currently exist for mercury, despite its dangers. A comprehensive national mercury monitoring network is needed to protect human health, safeguard our fisheries, and track the effect of reduced emissions. This monitoring network would also help policy makers, scientists, and the public better understand the sources, consequences, and trends in mercury pollution.

Specifically, our legislation would do the following:

First, it would direct the EPA, in conjunction with other agencies, to establish a national mercury monitoring program to measure and monitor levels in the air and watersheds; water and soil chemistry; and in marine, freshwater, and land organisms at multiple sites across our country.

Second, it would establish a scientific advisory panel to make recommendations for the establishment, site selection, measurement, recording protocols, and operations of the monitoring program.

Third, our bill would establish a centralized database for existing and newly collected environmental mercury data that could be accessed easily on the Internet. These data would be compatible with similar international efforts.

Fourth, the reporting requirements in our bill will help Congress assess the mercury pollution reduction levels that are needed in order to help prevent adverse human and ecological effects.

And finally, our bill would authorize a modest \$95 million over three years to carry out these important activities.

A robust national mercury monitoring network is needed to provide the data to help Congress and others make informed decisions to protect the people of our nation. I would ask unanimous consent that two endorsement letters – one from the American Lung Association and another from the American Geophysical Union – be entered into the hearing record which further explain the need for this legislation.

The Chairman mentioned that he and I have worked together to try to get up this monitoring system so that we have accurate data nationwide for many years. I hope that this can be the year where we finally enact it into law. I hope the committee will favorably report our bill for consideration by the full Senate, and I thank you both for the opportunity to testify before the committee today. Thank you.