



**IT'S TIME TO PROMOTE EQUITABLE  
ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER  
FOR PRIVATE WELL OWNERS  
ACROSS MASSACHUSETTS!**

## **Support House Budget Amendment #1104 "Well Water Study"**

This amendment requests no less than \$150,000 for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) to conduct a study and make recommendations for a program to ensure that drinking water from private wells is safe to consume.

In the Commonwealth, over 500,000 people get their water from a private well. However, unlike public water systems, there are no statewide protections to ensure these wells are safe from contaminants.

The study funded by this amendment would be the first step in developing a drinking water program for private wells to ensure that ALL Massachusetts residents have access to safe water!

### **CONTAMINATED PRIVATE WELLS ARE PREVALENT**

From 2020–2022, RCAP Solutions conducted 502 water quality tests across several Massachusetts towns. We found that ~32% of wells had levels of contaminants exceeding state health standards and/or suggesting potential health risks.

In addition, MassDEP's recent PFAS Private Well Sampling Program has found that ~15% of wells had PFAS levels exceeding new federal health standards.

### **CONTAMINANTS CAN HARM HEALTH**

Contaminants such as arsenic, E. coli, radon, uranium, and PFAS can lead to both short-term and long-term health impacts.

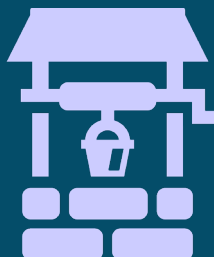
PFAS in particular can cause developmental effects in fetuses and infants. They also can cause harmful effects on the thyroid, liver, kidneys, certain hormones, and the immune system.



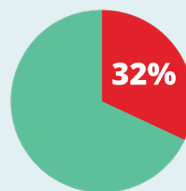
# WHY ARE STATEWIDE PRIVATE WELL REGULATIONS NEEDED?

## CURRENT LACK OF REGULATIONS IN PRIVATE WELLS

Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution established “the right to clean air and water”, yet half a million residents who rely on private wells may not know if their drinking water is safe from contaminants.



Unlike with public water systems, there are currently no statewide regulations to ensure private well water is safe. Individual Boards of Health have the authority to develop local regulations, but many are outdated or nonexistent.



## PRIVATE WELL PROGRAM UNCOVERS CONTAMINANTS

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## BOTTLED WATER IS NOT AN APPROPRIATE SOLUTION

Many people who discover contaminants in their wells resort to drinking bottled water, which is expensive. Plastic also harms the environment; 80% of plastic water bottles used in the United States end up in landfills.

## HEALTH IMPACTS OF CONTAMINATED WATER

| Contaminant              | Examples of Potential Health Risks   |
|--------------------------|--|
| PFAS (forever chemicals) | Developmental effects in fetuses & infants. Effects on the thyroid, liver, kidneys, certain hormones, & the immune system. |
| E. coli                  | Gastrointestinal illness   |
| Nitrate                  | Can cause death in babies younger than 6 months  |
| Radon                    | Cancer   |
| Total Coliform Bacteria  | Gastrointestinal illness   |
| Uranium                  | Cancer, kidney toxicity  |
| Manganese                | Neurological effects   |
| Arsenic                  | Cancer, skin damage, circulatory system problems   |

## INEQUITY IN COMMUNITIES

Residents who live in municipalities with public water systems or with local private well regulations are more likely to have access to safe drinking water than residents who don't.



## OTHER STATES WITH PRIVATE WELL REGULATIONS

Several other states (including Oregon, Rhode Island, and New Jersey) have sensible, health-based regulations for private wells. These states require private well water be tested for contaminants upon sale or transfer of a home. In addition, property owners must disclose the results of the well water test prior to the sale or transfer. Let's add Massachusetts to the list!



OREGON

Regulations Enacted: 1989  
Private Wells in OR: 350,000



RHODE ISLAND

Regulations Enacted: 2002  
Private Wells in RI: 48,000



NEW JERSEY

Regulations Enacted: 2002  
Private Wells in NJ: 400,000

In addition, New Jersey requires different counties test for different contaminants in areas which have varying contamination concerns.

