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## **New Legislation Aims to Protect Drinking Water, Provide Financial Assistance for Private Well Testing Statewide**

*As MassDEP Studies Potential Program, Coalition for Safe Drinking Water Urges Bill Passage*

**WORCESTER, Mass.** (Jan. 16, 2025) – Legislation filed this week would enable Massachusetts to develop minimum statewide water quality standards for private wells and expand a financial assistance program to remediate wells affected by PFAS (“forever chemicals”) and other harmful contaminants in drinking water supplies.

The filing of the bill ([SD.847](#)) by Sen. Jamie Eldridge (D-Marlborough) and Rep. Natalie Blais (D-Sunderland) was applauded by the [Coalition for Safe Drinking Water](#), a grassroots group led by [RCAP Solutions](#) and supported by [The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts](#) that is focused on equitable access to clean and safe drinking water.

More than half a million Massachusetts residents – located heavily in rural areas but also in all 351 cities and towns – rely on private wells for their drinking water. Yet many are consuming water that may be unsafe because the source is not regularly tested and treated like public water supplies and could have harmful contaminants such as PFAS, arsenic, radon, uranium and more. A [2023 poll](#) revealed that 92% of residents believe that state government should play a role in ensuring safe drinking water for all.

“As the Legislature continues to address PFAS contamination in communities across the state this session, it’s crucial that the hundreds of thousands of households relying on private well water have access to clean and safe drinking water,” said Sen. Eldridge. “That’s why I’m proud to once again file legislation to empower the DEP to regulate private wells and establish a program to help homeowners test their wells for dangerous contaminants.”

The initiative gained momentum last year in the state budget process, with \$100,000 appropriated to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) to conduct a study and make



recommendations for a statewide program to ensure that drinking water from private wells is safe to consume. The MassDEP study is currently in progress.

The newly filed legislation would grant the MassDEP clear authority to establish standards and define testing requirements for new and existing wells to ensure effective implementation. Upon the sale of a home, a private well used for drinking water would have to pass a test for the transaction to be completed (similar to the state's [Title 5 septic system regulations](#)). The state would make resources available to assist eligible homeowners with the cost of well water upgrades.

“We applaud Senator Eldridge, Representative Blais, Representative Kilcoyne and Representative Sena for their leadership on this important issue. Too many homeowners are not aware of what’s in their well water or how the presence of PFAS and other contaminants could harm their family’s health,” said Brian Scales, President & CEO of RCAP Solutions, a nonprofit community development corporation based in Worcester.

“Massachusetts residents who live in municipalities with public water systems have access to water that is tested and treated to meet state and federal standards, but those protections do not extend to those who rely on well water,” said Amie Shei, Ph.D., President & CEO of The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts. “Wells require regular testing and maintenance, just as public water systems do, but not everyone is aware of the need or can afford these services – creating a regional equity issue that can be addressed through this legislation.”

RCAP Solutions’ Private Well Program to Protect Public Health, funded by The Health Foundation, conducted over 500 water quality tests of private wells across several Massachusetts communities from 2020 to 2022, finding that about a third of the wells contained levels of contaminants higher than state health standards or suggesting potential health risks.

*For more information about the legislation and the Coalition for Safe Drinking Water, please visit [www.whatsinyourwellwater.org](http://www.whatsinyourwellwater.org).*

### **About RCAP Solutions**

RCAP Solutions is an integrated community development corporation working with a multi-faceted suite of services in communities throughout the northeastern part of the U.S. and the Caribbean. Established in 1969 (as Rural Housing Improvement), RCAP Solutions has supported the power and potential of communities for over half a century as strategists of community-wide well-being. Our mission is to foster personal and public self-reliance and improve the quality of life for individuals, families, and the communities in which they live. For more information, visit: [www.rcapsolutions.org](http://www.rcapsolutions.org).

### **About The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts**



The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts is dedicated to improving the health of those who live or work in Central Massachusetts, with particular emphasis on vulnerable populations and unmet needs. Through its unique and impactful approach to grantmaking, The Health Foundation supports community-identified health issues, with health defined broadly to include social determinants of health and with a focus on promoting health equity. As a health conversion foundation launched in 1999 following the sale of the not-for-profit HMO Central Massachusetts Health Care Inc. The Health Foundation's grants have totaled over \$59 million to more than 230 unique organizations over its history. For more information, visit [www.thfcm.org](http://www.thfcm.org).

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