



To: Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology

From: Ezra Sassaman, Maine Youth for Climate Justice

Date: March 30, 2023

Re: Testimony in favor of LD 1111: An Act Concerning Contracts and Agreements for Large-Scale Water Extraction

---

Senator Lawrence, Representative Ziegler, and the honorable members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, my name is Ezra Sassaman. I am writing as a representative for Maine Youth for Climate Justice (MYCJ), a coalition of over 460 youth from across the state who are fighting for bold climate action and a just transition to a livable future in Maine. I am writing in favor of LD 1111.

MYCJ demands that people are put first, not polluters and extractive corporations. We know that in a just world, the long-term right to a healthy environment must take precedence over the short-term profits of a few large companies.

LD 1111 is an important first step towards taking power back from extractive corporations and putting it where it belongs: in the hands of community members. This legislation enhances the democratic process by engaging municipalities in shared decision-making around the collective future of the natural resources these localities steward.

Based on what is estimated (there is not adequate public information available), nearly 97% of the bulk water export and bottling market in the State of Maine is controlled by a single company. This company rapidly took over the market between 2000 and 2006, immediately following the 1999 *Maddocks vs. Giles* ruling, which upheld “absolute dominion”. This ruling was based upon the inaction of the Maine legislature regarding water protection at that time.

There still has been no action to date.

That is why LD 1111 is necessary. Amending state law to better protect groundwater supplies is important to avoid further exploitation of natural resources at the hands of unaccountable corporations that do not care about their negative effects on the environment.

As it currently stands, municipalities that did not agree to long-term contracts with extractive water companies nevertheless experience negative effects from neighboring towns. Because aquifers and other water sources have no regard to property, municipal or political boundaries, legislation like LD 1111 is important to ensure watersheds remain healthy and ensure water remains abundant for future generations.

For the above reasons, our coalition, Maine Youth for Climate Justice, urges you to vote ought-to-pass on LD 1111. Thank you.