

TESTIMONY in support of LD 536: An Act to Provide Natural Organic Reduction Facilities for Maine residents for the Conversion of Human Remains to Soil  
March 28, 2023

Mr./Madame Chairperson and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services of the Maine Legislature,

I am writing in support of LD 536 to provide Natural Organic Reduction services for Maine people.

I support this bill both because of the comfort and dignity that result from offering alternative ways of handling remains after a death, and because the organic reduction process, from what I have read, minimizes the impact on our environment.

My motivation to give testimony grows out of my Christian faith. I know there are religious organizations that are not comfortable with this and other methods of handling remains. My faith community, Nativity Lutheran Church in Rockport, belongs to a nationwide denomination of Lutherans known as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (or ELCA), which is the largest of the Lutheran denominations in our country. Most of the Lutheran churches in Maine belong to the ELCA. The ELCA does not favor or discourage choices around the handling of remains after death. We assert that the time surrounding a person's death is a sensitive time requiring caring and wisdom. We value offering support to individuals and their loved ones to make their own decisions based on the choices available to them. Equally important, members of the ELCA value good stewardship of the earth and all that God has made, and understand that our individual choices in many areas, including the decisions around the handling of remains, can lessen our impact on our environment.

I share the values of my larger church. In my view, allowing another choice to Maine's people can only be a positive development. It will not replace choices that already exist, but add to those choices. It is good to know that a new choice can stand alongside already existing choices, and that there are guidelines in the state's current law and experience from our already existing practices that will help us institute and oversee these services effectively.

Death is an eventuality for everyone, but it can be difficult, both as the one preparing for it, and the one left to manage after losing a loved one. Having choices helps.

Thank you for your attention to my testimony, and for the work you are doing for the people of our state.

Elaine Isakson  
Rockland, Maine