

Testimony in Favor of LD 1473
An Act to Protect Certain Unfiltered Drinking Water Sources

Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Dear Senate Chair Brenner, House Chair Gramlich and Members of the Joint Standing Committee,

My name is Joshua Nagine. I am a public water ratepayer residing in Lewiston who depends on a watershed connected to a body of water that currently enjoys a waiver from filtration granted by the EPA. I also sit on the planning board in Lewiston, hold a position on the board at the Lewiston Farmers Market Association, Downtown Lewiston Association (an economic development advocacy group focused on downtown businesses, residents and property owners) and am the current Board President of Androscoggin Land Trust, an accredited land trust that holds and monitors conservation easements in the Lake Auburn watershed for public benefit by protecting portions of the 15 square miles of watershed that sits in five different communities, and is the source of drinking water for three municipalities.

The science behind managing and maintaining the EPA waiver from filtration can sometimes be confusing and complex, especially for laypersons with no background in water quality monitoring and watershed management. Encroachment, surface water runoff, canopy cover, impacts of specific septic systems, anthropogenic climate change, and many other factors influence predictions of what can happen to water quality when changes occur in our watersheds. What isn't hard to predict is that development within environmentally sensitive watersheds threatens to carry an impact which affects water quality in many communities. Protecting the quality and affordability of our drinking water is paramount to protecting the quality of life and affordability of our communities.

As a planning board member, I understand and value LD 2003 and appreciate the options that are aimed at removing barriers to creating more housing, specifically more affordable housing. I would point out that the relatively small footprints and locations of the lands that fall into the watersheds of bodies of water that are currently exempt from filtration as a drinking water source in Maine are minuscule in relation to the amount of developable lands in the State, that they are not likely to produce any measurable results LD 2003 was written to address, particularly affordable housing, and that fixed costs such as the management of public water supply are passed on to consumers. This affects the cost of living of individuals as well as the operating budgets of businesses, local food producers and municipalities that rely on public water. In short, affordable water is part of affordable housing, and the development impacts in a limited area could affect the affordability of housing in entire communities.

Maine's management of the State's natural resources for public benefit have long been the envy of others, creating a uniquely Maine tradition where surface water provides a source of drinking water for so almost half of the State's residents. Out of the handful of bodies of water in the entire country that currently enjoy a waiver from filtration, a quarter of them are found in Maine and provide over a third of public water utility customers with affordable, safe, clean drinking water. For these reasons and more, I

strongly urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1473 when the vote is taken to Protect Certain Unfiltered Drinking Water Sources.