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January 25, 2024

Senator Mark Lawrence

Representative Paige Zeigler

Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology
100 State House Station Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Testimony in Support of L.D. 2104

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, members of the EUT Committee, my name is Chris Cossette, and I am the Superintendent of the Wiscasset Water District. I am here today, with the full support of my board of trustees, to testify in support of this legislation. This bill does not actively change any individual's water or sewer service, it merely gives the Wiscasset Water District the ability to meet the needs of our community both now and in the future. It is also important to note that each municipality involved has requested this step so that broader conversations may take place as populations and resources shift.

There are six pieces to this legislation that are worth mentioning so I am going to dive right in but am happy to answer questions on the history of our district and how each individual piece got here.

- This bill would allow the District to serve residents in the entire municipal boundary of Edgecomb with water. We currently serve a very small portion of Edgecomb, some structures on Davis Island, but this would allow that footprint to expand should there be the demand for it.
- This bill would allow the District to serve the municipal bounds of Edgecomb with sewer service. Again, pipe isn't going in the ground right away; this would simply allow for the service if, but more likely when, the need arises.
- The third part of this bill is to allow the District to serve sewer needs in Wiscasset. Currently the operation of the sewer system is being met by the Wiscasset Sewer Department but there is an ongoing conversation as to who the best long-term owner is for the system. This would not enable the District to "steal" the sewer system from the town but would authorize the District to operate the system if that is the desire of the town in the future.
- The District currently serves a very small group of customers in Woolwich, and Section 5 of this bill would allow those customers to also be served by sewer, should infrastructure be placed in the ground.

- The fifth important thing to point out is that all these changes require a public vote from the impacted communities. None of these permissions will be in effect until the people who will benefit, and shoulder any costs, have their say at the ballot box.
- The next thing that needs to be addressed is the matter of representation. This bill has activation provision that requires one trustee to be from the town of Edgecomb should at least 1/3 of residents be connected to the system. This will ensure that the people being served are adequately represented, but if service is not expanded the board will remain as it is today.

On the issue of the Board of Trustees, I would ask for one minor change in the language. In Section 8, Line 35 mentions the town meeting held in March. This meeting no longer takes place, and we would like to change that language to say the “election in June.”

Ultimately this legislation is about ensuring safe drinking water and proper treatment of wastewater to a swath of the mid-coast that is crucial to the people who reside there and the state as a whole. It makes no changes to the day-to-day operations but rather allows the residents of the area to decide what systems will work best for them in the future. I respectfully ask that you support this legislation and am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,
Chris Cossette
Superintendent, Wiscasset Water District