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MWUA

MAINE WATER UTILITIES ASSOCIATION

Organized in 1925

February 12, 2025

Honorable Denise Tepler, Chair
Honorable Victoria Doudera, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Maine State Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 296 – An Act to Appropriate Funds to the Department of Environmental Protection, Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund

Dear Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resource:

The Maine Water Utilities Association (MWUA) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 296, which appropriates \$2 million for the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund.

About MWUA. MWUA is a nonprofit association based in Augusta that provides support for water works professionals throughout the State of Maine in advocating for safe drinking water through educational and technical programming as well as advocacy on the local, state, and national level. The Association was formed in 1925 and consists of approximately 86 utility and 60 associate members. Maine's water utilities provide service to approximately 700,000 Maine residents, thousands of Maine businesses and public institutions, and millions of visitors to Maine every year.

Discussion. LD 296 proposes to provide \$2 million for the Department of Environmental Protection's Lake Restoration and Protection Fund (Fund). A high quality of source water supply is the first line of defense in protecting public health. The Fund could be used to protect or restore water quality in Maine's public water sources. Every investment made in protecting or restoring these supplies greatly aids the ability of water utilities to provide high quality water to the people of Maine.

Beyond drinking water supplies, Maine lakes provide billions of dollars for Maine's economy annually (Maine Department of Environmental Protection, 2023). The ability to improve the quality of lakes that need it and maintain the quality of others is vital for the State of Maine.

Conclusion. The Lake Restoration and Protection Fund, if funded, would provide an opportunity to access financial resources to maintain and improve water quality in Maine's lakes, including those used as sources of drinking water. Improvements in source water quality results in greater consistency in drinking water quality and advances water systems' efforts to protect public health.

Thank you for your consideration,

Nicki Pellenz
Executive Director

cc: Roger Crouse, Chair, MWUA Legislative & Regulatory Affairs Committee
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, Legislative Counsel

