



February 11, 2025

Re: Support for 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 the Distinguished Members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

My name is Colin Holme and I am the Director of the Lakes Environmental Association. Our organization is headquartered in Bridgton, Maine and we directly work in the upper Sebago and Saco River watersheds but we also partner with organizations and agencies like the Maine Department of Environmental Protection to address issues related to lakes and freshwater systems across the State. Our programs include water quality monitoring, aquatic invasives control and prevention, in-school and public education, stream restoration, stormwater control, and technical assistance for landowners, businesses, and municipalities.

Every year, we are in contact with colleagues and partners across the state who are dealing with cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) blooms. The good news is that these blooms can be treated, making the lake clear again and free of noxious and potentially toxic algae. The bad news is that these blooms are becoming more and more common and the treatment is often prohibitively expensive.

The simple fact is that for most communities, there is no way that they could undertake the costs of treating a whole-lake algal bloom without financial support and guidance from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. There are already around ten lakes in the State that are experiencing harmful algal blooms and the number of blooming lakes is only going to increase as Maine's climate warms. Without a dedicated funding mechanism to deal with algal blooms, we are going to lose more iconic waters that are a part of Maine's identity and economy.

LD 296 proposes to allocate \$4 million in revenue to the Lake Restoration and Protection Fund in the two upcoming fiscal years. While large bulk allocations are very useful, I encourage the Committee to consider smaller yearly, and non-lapsing allocations to this fund to ensure all lakes that experience human-caused algae blooms in the future have appropriate resources to bring these waterbodies back to a natural state.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. **I encourage you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 296.**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colin Holme".

Colin Holme
Executive Director
Lakes Environmental Association

