

Arleigh Kraus

Warren

LD 1073

March 24, 2025

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

LD 1073

An Act to Amend Provisions of the Maine Metallic Mineral Mining Act to Advance Health Equity and Improve the Well-being of Vulnerable Populations

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, My name is Arleigh Kraus, I am a scientist with a degree in biochemistry, an organic farmer, and business owner in Warren. I am a board member of CARMA, Citizens Against Residential Mining Activities. I work with several experts in mining and environmental policy across the state.

I am writing in strong support of this critical piece of legislation, which amends the Maine Metallic Mineral Mining Act to address crucial environmental, public health, and safety concerns associated with mining operations in our state. The proposed amendments reflect a necessary and long-overdue modernization of mining regulations, ensuring that our natural resources, communities, and future generations are protected from the potential harms of industrial mining activities.

Maine's Chapter 200: Metallic Mineral Mining Rules were developed to regulate mining operations and prevent the environmental disasters seen in past projects like the Callahan Mine Superfund Site. While these regulations appear to be stricter than those in many other states, they still contain critical weaknesses that could allow contamination, financial liabilities, and harm to local communities, i.e. personal health, water and air quality to name a few.

Chapter 200 allows waste storage in some floodplains and does not fully protect groundwater within the mining site itself. The rule requires mining companies to provide financial assurances (bonds or trust funds) for site reclamation and cleanup. However, mining disasters often result in decades-long contamination—and if a company declares bankruptcy, the costs fall on taxpayers, health insurers, and **VERY PERSONALLY ON THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL**.

First and foremost, LD1073 strengthens the oversight of fugitive emissions, ensuring that unintentional discharges of hazardous materials into the air, water, and soil are properly managed and mitigated. By holding mining operations accountable for fugitive emissions from their mining processes, equipment and infrastructure, we can reduce pollution and help protect both human health and ecological integrity.

The legislation also addresses mine waste management by refining the definitions of mining activities and ensuring that waste disposal and treatment meet stringent environmental standards. Importantly, it mandates financial assurances for the perpetual treatment and monitoring of mine waste and tailings, safeguarding against long-term contamination risks. This is a critical step in ensuring that mining companies, rather than taxpayers, and citizenry bear the financial responsibility for remediating any environmental damage.

Additionally, the bill introduces a requirement for a comprehensive human health impact assessment, which will evaluate potential risks to vulnerable populations—including pregnant individuals, elders, persons with at risk health issues, and children—due to exposure to pollutants from mining operations. The inclusion of a baseline health data evaluation ensures that we have the necessary information to track and mitigate any adverse health effects over time.

Furthermore, the bill includes essential prohibitions on the use of hazardous substances, such as perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and perchlorate-containing explosives, reducing the risk of toxic contamination in Maine's environment. By enforcing setbacks from sensitive areas—including schools, elder care facilities, and locations of cultural and ecological significance—the bill prioritizes the well-being of our communities and natural landscapes.

The air quality monitoring and fence-line emissions tracking requirements will provide

much-needed transparency and accountability for mining operations. Ensuring that emissions data is directly measured, rather than estimated, will lead to more accurate assessments and informed regulatory decisions. Additionally, requiring insurance coverage for potential environmental and public health damages ensures that affected communities are not left to bear the burden of unforeseen disasters.

This bill aligns with our state's commitment to sustainable development and responsible resource management. By implementing these necessary protections, we can support economic activities like mining while ensuring that they do not come at the cost of our environment, public health, and community well-being.

I urge the Committee and the Maine Legislature to pass this bill to strengthen our mining regulations and uphold our responsibility to protect Maine's people, environment, and Maine's future prosperity.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,  
Arleigh A. Kraus