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LD 1073

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Greetings, Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Environmental and Natural Resource (ENR) Committee Members:

My name is Kelly Merrill, I am a resident of Stratton, ME and I am here today as the Co-chair of the Maine Green Independent Party to provide testimony in support of LD 1073 “An Act to Amend Provisions of the Maine Metallic Mining Mineral Act to Advance Health Equity and Improve the Well Being of Vulnerable Populations”.

Last week the President issued an executive order expediting mining permitting and opening up federal lands to extraction, under the guise of national security. I too very much worry about our national security, in this country that is deeply divided, sick and unstable. And I know that mining is the most destructive and polluting human activity on the planet, causing untold suffering for people and life surrounding it. This makes us less secure.

Examples of destruction and existential devastation from mining projects are ongoing. The recent Chinese Sino-Metals disaster just dumped 50 million litres of acid, heavy metals and toxic sludge into the Kafue River in Zambia. This is a catastrophic environmental disaster that has already killed fish, spoiled crops, and devastated life supported by the river. Maine, too, is a vulnerable place.

One of the last mining project proposed and subsequently denied in Maine, would have committed what amounts to just 2% of its anticipated profits to remediation, which would then leave the company free to cause irrevocable damage and walk away.

It is up to us to prevent such damage. That’s where LD 1073 comes in. This bill, to advance the well-being of vulnerable populations and to advance health equity, is an intervention that demands transparency, accountability and responsibility in perpetuity.

Prior to initiating any mining operations, this bill would require comprehensive and periodic health assessments, and forthright transparency around the risks for impacted communities. This bill would also require adequate and ongoing monitoring of toxic waste after closure, and ensures financial support for such monitoring and any remediation necessary to protect the health and wellbeing of surrounding communities.

I worry about shell companies that go bankrupt by unsustainable practices, and cannibalistic, malevolent corporations who game this system to evade responsibility for the irrevocable destruction of this land. I worry about those companies who come in for the taking and then leave us with the fallout.

This bill seeks to address the perfidy of such entities. My hope is that we are decisive enough to respond in a way that demands their responsibility to us, the water, and the land.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Merrill
Co-Chair, Maine Green Independent Party
Resident of Stratton, Maine