

Lee Street
Lincoln, ME 04457
LD 795

Re: LD 795 and LD 1073

Dear Members of the Environmental and Natural Resources Committee:

Do we want and need lithium? In a word... yes. It seems at this point to be crucial in the development of products that will reduce greenhouse gases to combat the crisis of global warming.

So we probably all need to be onboard both with figuring out how to extract Lithium safely from the earth and how to recycle lithium so that we do not need an endless supply of a finite substance.

The operative word here is “safely”. The problem is that safety is NOT GENERALLY the principle concern of any for profit company. Decisions are based on producing products for the least amount of money that will maximize profit. That is just the way it works. We have a long history in this country of companies promising to do things the “right way” who do not then do what they have promised. We have a long history of impoverished communities welcoming companies because of promised economic benefit to those communities in the form of providing jobs and property tax relief that then leave ruined landscapes, pollution, and environmentally induced health problems behind them. Sick individuals in such communities oftentimes do not even know the chemicals they are exposed to (or the potential health problems those chemicals contribute to) leaving these sick individuals and their doctors little room to remedy their ailments).

What happens to these sick people - cancer patients, people with endocrine problems (possibly potentially trans or autistic problems?), babies with birth defects, infertile couples?... They become a burden to our already stretched health system contributing to inflated federal budgets, bankrupting hospitals, exacerbating poverty and homelessness. Frequently, such people become disabled, unable to support themselves. They are added to our long lists of “entitled people” enrolled onto public assistance and disability compensation relying on our federal and state monies to survive. This has happened time and again in communities across this country. They are examples of short term gain for some resulting in long term pain, suffering and costs for our community members and for the country.

The only guardrail to prevent these costs is regulations which, yes are a pain for companies to deal with and result in immediate higher costs and a slowing of the rush to mine.. However, these regulations are our ONLY protection for our land and our people (and our future budgets). They protect us in the long run.

So I urge you to consider before jumping aboard with enthusiasm to allow lithium extractors to be able to pillage our sacred and pristine land without following the regulations that are CURRENTLY IN PLACE in order to make their own huge profits and “help” our communities economies— to consider the history of mining in this country. Consider that a brief internet search on lithium mining (which is just an AI scratching on the surface of the data about “the dangers of lithium mining”)... shows. (A quote from the first google search:)

“While crucial for the clean energy transition , lithium mining is not environmentally friendly and has significant impacts including water pollution, land degradation and potential habitats destruction.

Lithium mining, particularly brine extraction can lead to water pollution including contamination of water pollution with toxic metals.

Land degradation - Hard rock mining can cause significant land disruption and wast generation (tailings and deforestation).

Habitat consumption - Destroy or damage national habitats destroying biodiversity.

Water consumption - lithium extraction can require a large amounts of water potentially straining local water resources

Energy intensive.... Uses large amount of energy contributing to carbon emissions

Waste generation.... Large amounts of mineral waste... environmental hazards.”

So committee members, I hope that you will consider that particularly in the areas that are being considered for lithium mining in this state, (northern Maine and the areas around Sunday River).... our local communities and businesses RELY on the beauty and health of our land AND the purity of our water. Remember some of these companies are already mining our natural resources with insufficient compensation to the citizens of Maine (e.g. Poland Springs Water). If our resources are poisoned, these businesses will be jeopardized.

There are probably good arguments to suggest that current regulations already will NOT be enough to truly protect our lands, people and water, and SHOULD be much MADE EVEN more stringent. There are other arguments that these existing regulations are ALREADY insufficient guardrails because there are no teeth or oversight methods stipulated and so mining companies can and do break the law routinely and take shortcuts counting on not being caught or held accountable. So even with our current regulations, there will probably be irreversible damage done.

So please do not let the greed triggered by the opportunity of emerging industries new need for lithium blind you to the true costs of relaxing existing standards for short term gain. Please support our existing regulations by opposing LD 795 and even consider strengthening existing protections by supporting LD 1073 in order to protect our resources, our lives and our livelihoods. Thank you for your consideration.