

Testimony of Councilor Elyse Tipton, South Portland resident and City Councilor,
District Five, to the *Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources*, in
support of LD 1507, *An Act to Improve Public Health and Safety by Requiring Community
Notification of Petroleum Offloading Activities*

April 14, 2025

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and honorable members of the Environment
and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Elyse Tipton, and I serve as City Councilor, District Five, for South Portland,
where Maine's largest cluster of petroleum storage tanks lines our shoreline.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this legislation to require timely
public notification when oil is being offloaded in our coastal communities.

This bill represents a meaningful, overdue step toward protecting public health—
especially in frontline neighborhoods directly adjacent to oil terminals and tank farms.

In South Portland, residents have lived for decades with emissions from petroleum
facilities, often without knowing when the most significant releases of hazardous air
pollutants occur. Tanker offloading (and loading) activities are known to generate
spikes in volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions, including chemicals like benzene,
that pose serious health risks, especially to children, our older residents, and people
with respiratory conditions.

Yet, our residents have had no consistent way to know when to take precautions. No
notice. No warning.

This bill ensures that residents who want to be informed can receive electronic
notification, within 24 hours, when petroleum is being transferred between a ship,
terminal, truck, or another vessel. It is a common-sense public health measure that
would allow people to take voluntary protective steps—such as staying indoors or
postponing outdoor activity during peak emission periods.

Importantly, the legislation also gives municipalities a voice in the development of these
notification plans, alongside the Department of Environmental Protection. That
collaborative approach helps ensure the plans are meaningful, realistic, and responsive
to local concerns.

We're not asking facilities to stop operating. We're asking for accurate, timely
information and transparency that will help communities like mine ensure our
residents can better protect our health.

I know that my fellow residents are deeply concerned about industrial activity just blocks from their homes, parks, and schools that is having an impact on air quality. This legislation gives them a simple tool: the ability to know when offloading is happening, so they can reduce their exposure.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support this bill as an important measure to improve transparency, and thereby environmental health, in Maine's coastal cities and towns.

Thank you for your attention and for your work on behalf of Maine people.