

Tom Mikulka
Cape Elizabeth
LD 1138

To: Maine Legislative Committee on Transportation

From: Tom Mikulka, Ph.D., CIH (ret)

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Subject: Testimony on LD1138

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, I am writing as an environmental scientist with a specialty in air quality and a former member of the South Portland Clean Air Advisory committee. Vehicle emissions represent approximately half of the greenhouse gas emissions in Maine. Those emissions are not only a threat to the climate but also represent a serious health threat.

A 2020 Harvard University study published in collaboration with 3 Universities in the UK, estimated that 1 in every 5 deaths worldwide is caused by burning fossil fuels.

As a resident of Cape Elizabeth for the past 16 years, I have witnessed a dramatic increase in traffic on all arterials entering Portland. In 2019 the Maine DEP began a major 3 year study of ambient air quality in South Portland. That study also included 2 sites in downtown Portland along Commercial St. In 2021 Maine CDC reported increases in cancer risk at those two sites that were approximately twice the risk for each of the 5 sites in South Portland. The carcinogenic compounds causing the increased risk were all combustion products from diesel and gasoline engines.

The unpopular Turnpike Authority Gorham Connector project was projected to further increase traffic into Downtown Portland resulting in even higher cancer risks. LD 1138 will require a thoughtful analysis of such projects that considers the impact of personal vehicles versus mass transit.

I strongly support this bill because it will help Maine plan for a more climate friendly future with the additional benefit of reducing health risks from burning fossil fuels.