

April 27, 2025

*RE LD1349: An Act to Require Legislative Approval for a Contract to Operate the Juniper Ridge Landfill*

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for LD1249, a bill which would require Legislative approval before entering into or renewing a contract to operate the Juniper Ridge Landfill. I am a resident of Old Town, one of several communities which are most directly impacted by what happens at Juniper Ridge.

Juniper Ridge is a major, state owned facility which accepts waste from all over Maine, and at times has also accepted waste from outside Maine. However, while the state as a whole may benefit from having a place to dispose of its waste, the local community, including both Old Town and our immediate neighbors, the Penobscot Nation, bear the brunt of the odor, traffic, and toxic smoke that occur intermittently from fires at the landfill. These issues impact the health and safety of our communities, as well as sensitive wetland areas in the Penobscot river basin- yet we have no say in the regulation or mitigation of pollution coming from the landfill, pollution which makes fish unsafe to eat and water unsafe to drink for humans, birds, and other living things. These hazards will be made significantly worse by the major expansion currently being proposed for Juniper Ridge.

Currently, decisions are made about landfill expansion through an administrative process which only pays lip service to public concerns. For example, at several “public information sessions,” Juniper Ridge contractors insulted members of the public by assuring us that the landfill would not add to the burden of PFAS and other contaminants impacting environmental quality in our region; despite that fact that community members already experience toxic smoke and unsafe water. Additionally, the extent of the pollution caused by the landfill at its current size has never been adequately evaluated and, with regards to the fires that sometimes erupt from the landfill, have been actively denied by the landfill operator, Cassella Waste Management.

The contractors who spoke at these community “informational” events were employed by Cassella to present their position in glossy powerpoints, just as they do to state administrators who currently hold decision making power over contracting with Cassella. These contractors were either ill equipped or unwilling to answer many hard questions from local residents. Yet DEP determined that these educational sessions had fulfilled the requirement for informing the community *finding no violation of the “environmental justice” requirement of the review process.* Given the strong objection of many Old Town community members and the Penobscot Nation to expanding Juniper Ridge, and the lack of representation we collectively suffered in the determination process, this finding would be laughable if it wasn’t ultimately dangerous.

In contrast to the current inequitable process, LD 1349 will, if enacted, ensure that decisions about this state-owned landfill would be made by the Maine Legislature, a body which is elected by and accountable to the people of the state to protect the public good. Because there are many public and environmental health concerns from the current landfill operations which are not being addressed, this bill would provide the Legislature opportunity to investigate and address critical issues prior to any contracting.

Additionally LD1349 will facilitate a transparent conversation about how much waste should be brought to Juniper Ridge from other parts of Maine, how much risk the rest of the state is asking our local communities to absorb, and whether any of this meets Maine's environmental goals, including its commitment to environmental justice. I have confidence that elected officials, who are accountable to their constituents wherever they may be in Maine, will understand the need to meaningfully include community concerns in decision making processes.

Old Town, the Penobscot Nation, surrounding communities, and the Penobscot River have born the brunt of air and water contamination caused by Juniper Ridge Landfill even at its current size. However, the administrative review process in existence now has entirely ignored our concerns and prioritized corporate profit over community health. We do not consent to being a sacrifice zone and deserve a decision- making process which includes the voice of those who would be most directly impacted by the proposed landfill expansion.

I urge the Committee to vote in favor of LD1349, to ensure fair representation and accountability for decisions made about waste management in Maine and specifically for Juniper Ridge Landfill.

Sincere regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Daisy', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Daisy Goodman

Old Town, ME