

**LD 297 An Act Regarding the Management of Oversized Bulky Waste from Wastewater  
Treatment Plants  
Testimony IN OPPOSITION  
Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
Public Hearing  
Submitted by | Jacquelyn Elliott  
April 28, 2025**

Chair Senator Tepler; Chair Representative Doudera; and Honorable Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony **IN OPPOSITION to LD 297**. My name is Jackie Elliott and I live in Waterboro. For multiple decades I have been engaged as an environmental health and justice advocate with the primary focus of promoting waste policy protective of public health and the environment; and that promotes environmental justice for communities impacted by waste processing and disposal facilities. **Waste is a verb. It is something we choose to do. We can make better choices.**

LD 1639<sup>1</sup> was enacted to reserve disposal capacity as required by statute<sup>2</sup> at JRL for construction and demolition (CDD) waste generated within the state at the urging of citizens most harmed by operations of the Juniper Ridge (JRL) state-owned landfill. Operations for the landfill are contracted with **Casella Waste Systems d.b.a. New England Waste Services of Maine (NEWSME), a mega for-profit<sup>3</sup> waste corporation with substantial operations for collecting, transporting, processing and disposal of waste from across the region<sup>4</sup> and Atlantic mid-coast.** This Operating Services Agreement is with the Bureau of General Services through the Department of Administrative and Financial Services. **LD 297 would roll back the progress** that has been made to prevent classification of out-of-state CDD as in-state waste when minimally processed at Maine facility. It **would redefine in-state-waste to include residue of residue** and

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<sup>1</sup> LD 1639 An Act To Protect the Public health and Welfare of Maine Communities and Reduce harmful Solid Waste: <https://www.mainelegislature.org/LawMakerWeb/summary.asp?ID=280080698>

<sup>2</sup> Title 38: WATERS AND NAVIGATION, Chapter 13: WASTE MANAGEMENT. Subchapter 1-A: SOLID WASTE Article 3: SOLID WASTE FACILITY SITING, 11. Waste generated within the State. Consistent with the Legislature's findings in [section 1302](#), a solid waste disposal facility owned by the State may not be licensed to accept waste that is not waste generated within the State. [PL 2019, c. 619, §5 (AMD).]: <https://legislature.maine.gov/legis/statutes/38/title38sec1310-N.html>

<sup>3</sup> February 14, 2025, Megan Quinn, *Casella notes landfill volume internalization and further acquisitions as key for 2025*: <https://www.wastedive.com/news/casella-q4-2024-earnings-acquisitions-recycling-infrastructure-landfill-volumes/740142/>

<sup>4</sup> March 18, 2022, Charlie Eichacker, *Maine's landfill is meant for in-state waste. Here's how Massachusetts and New Hampshire are filling it up*: <https://www.mainepublic.org/environment-and-outdoors/2022-03-18/maines-landfill-is-meant-for-in-state-waste-heres-how-massachusetts-and-nh-are-filling-it-up>

**open a new loophole** for portions of the CDD waste stream imported from other states to be disposed at Juniper Ridge. All that is **required** is **some of the waste first be used for landfill cover**. This would again **squander disposal capacity set aside for Maine waste and diminish the value of an asset established to benefit Maine citizens**. LD 297 would **provide a disguise for out-of-state waste** and assure that it is **nearly impossible to account for the origin of the waste being disposed at Juniper Ridge**. Information that is vital if the Department of Environmental Protection is going to move forward with better resource and materials management policy and practice that further the goals of the State Waste Hierarchy<sup>5</sup>.

The **argument for LD 297 is disingenuous** and resurrects Casella's bad-faith explanation for LD 718<sup>6</sup> responding to the purported 2023 'sludge crisis'<sup>7</sup> and the need for Casella to import 250,000 tons of out-of-state waste asserted to manage sludge. Legislative scrutiny brought the figure to a more credible 25,000 tons a year. **LD 297 is a further effort to distort the definition of in-state waste and push for importing tonnage far beyond what is needed for managing sludge**. LD 297 maintains Casella's profit for disposing out-of-state waste at JRL and undergirds Casella's continued efforts to expand Juniper Ridge while defeating efforts to implement waste reduction, diversion, and recycling.

Additionally, there is **potential that LD 297 would retroactively support improper landfilling of wastes landfilled at JRL since 2023**. The Government Oversight Committee voted 10-1 on February 14, 2025 to investigate operations at Juniper Ridge to include: means of effective control of out-of-state waste disposal; examination of Casella's adherence to the dictates of the State Solid Waste Hierarchy; and what measures could be employed so the State can exercise more effective utilization and regulation of JRL.

**Most important, is the matter of environmental injustice borne by Juniper Ridge's neighbors – the citizens of Old Town, Alton, and Penobscot Indian Nation**, who endure the destructive impacts from Juniper Ridge's operations on their health, air, land, and water. These JRL neighbors are **unjustly burdened with the toxic outcomes from disposal of more than half of the State's waste**. LD 297 **provides a get-out for out-of-state waste that perpetuates this injustice** and is untenable. The Penobscot River, sacred to the Penobscot Nation, and a treasured resource for us all, is continuously poisoned with millions of gallons of JRL leachate effluent every year contaminated with high levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS),

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<sup>5</sup> Title 38: WATERS AND NAVIGATION, Chapter 24: SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING, Subchapter 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS: <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/38/title38sec2101.html>

<sup>6</sup> LD 718 An Act to Facilitate the management of Wastewater Treatment Plant Sludge at the State-owned Juniper Ridge Landfill: <https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=SP0276&item=4&snum=131>

<sup>7</sup> April 20, 2023, Sawyer Loftus, *The showdown behind the scenes of Maine's sludge crisis*: <https://www.bangordailynews.com/2023/04/20/mainefocus/behind-the-scenes-maine-sludge-crisis-joam40zk0w/>

and other persistent toxic chemicals such as dioxin. An ATSDR 2021 report contains health<sup>8</sup> warnings about fish consumption and an elevated incidence of cancer. LD 297 would continue and increase those assaults.

In conclusion, Maine taxpayers should not be subsidizing Casella's profitable operations at Juniper Ridge for disposal of waste from across New England and should not be subjected to the financial, environmental, and public health costs of disposal for other states' waste irresponsibility. **The State has a legal obligation to enforce the State Waste Hierarchy goals and prioritize landfill capacity for in-state waste. LD 297 is regressive and undoes the gains of LD 1639 under the guise of deceptive definitions.** This legislation puts private profits over public interests and benefits Casella's profit line, not the state of Maine.

Thank you for considering my comments. **I urge the Committee to vote unanimously OUGHT NOT TO PASS and uphold Maine's commitment and leadership for responsible resource and materials management.**

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<sup>8</sup> November 12, 2024, *Helping the Penobscot Indian nation: Review of Anadromous Fish for Consumption*:  
<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/2021-annual-report/php/helping-the-penobscot-indian-nation-review-of-anadromous-fish-for-consumption.html>