

Testimony in Support of Maine Bill LD1637

Advocating for Environmental Stewardship and Accountability

Honorable Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Maine Bill LD1637, which aims to amend and enhance the responsibilities and structure of the Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority (MRRA). This bill is essential for ensuring that MRRA engages in rigorous environmental stewardship and is held accountable for the decisions that impact our communities. MRRA is a real estate development group. At their inception, they were not equipped to deal with the requirements to successfully manage development on a CERCLA Superfund Site. Sixteen years later, MRRA has made no progress comprehending or addressing in any meaningful way the danger uninformed decisions based purely on their reputation, the bottom line and profit pose to the environment community and unsuspecting victims.

I would like to share a personal experience that underscores the urgent need for the provisions outlined in LD1637. On August 19, 2024, our community experienced the devastating AFFF Chemical Disaster at the Brunswick Airport on Brunswick Landing managed by MRRA. This disaster is the worst chemical disaster of its kind in Maine's history and the sixth worst disaster of its kind in our country. As a result of decisions made by MRRA, my home's private well was destroyed, rendering it unusable. We were forced to raid our retirement savings to pay over \$35,000 .00 out of pocket to hook up to the town water supply. This financial burden and the associated stress could have been avoided if there had been greater accountability and a focus on environmental protection. There are several neighbors on our road, RTE 123 and Princes Point Road facing the same toxic poisoning, expense and hardship because of MRRA's lack of accountability and Environmental Stewardship.

Maine Bill LD1637 addresses several critical issues:

1. ****Environmental Stewardship****: The bill amends the goals of MRRA to require it to engage in environmental stewardship. This is crucial for preventing future disasters and ensuring that the authority prioritizes the health and safety of our environment and residents. MRRA does not appear to prioritize the health and safety of the environment or residents. An example is MRRA has entered a business arrangement with a company called VIRIDI. MRRA plans to lease the land for development of a PFAS Sludge digester. I attended a public meeting for this plan. It was held at Brunswick Town Council Chambers and recorded. During the meeting it was stated that VIRIDI

has never built a digester of this nature before, the left over PFAS water will be dumped into the sewer system which is not filtered and end up in the Androscoggin River. Viridi is in partnership with Casella who plan to truck in sludge laden with PFAS for processing onto Brunswick Landing the site of the worst AFFF/PFAS disaster in Maine's history. A site whose ground water PFAS levels are the highest in the state of Maine. To add insult to injury, VIRIDI will need to truck Sludge Laden with PFAS in from other states to meet their processing quota. Brunswick Maine desperately needs MRRA to be monitored and held accountable for their deals and business practices.

2. ****Board of Trustees Membership****: The bill increases the membership of the board of trustees of the MRRA by three members, bringing the total to 14. This includes:

- Requiring the Governor to appoint a second commissioner of a department of State Government.
- Adding a voting member appointed by the chair of the Brunswick town council.
- Adding a nonvoting member who is a Senator or Representative representing Brunswick or Topsham, with rotating 2-year terms.

3. ****Local Representation****: It removes the requirement that at least seven of the ten Governor-appointed members must be residents of Androscoggin County, Cumberland County, or Sagadahoc County. Instead, it requires that at least four must be residents of Brunswick or Brunswick town officials or business owners. This ensures that the voices of those most directly impacted by the MRRA's decisions are heard. Previously, MRRA has influenced board member applications and overruled applications citing conflicts of interest. The applicants were upstanding members of the Brunswick community who live and work, raise their families, run businesses and employ people from the community. They are decent tax paying citizens with a huge stake in ensuring MRRA is run in a way that represents and protects the values, needs and vision of the future of Brunswick. It is unacceptable that MRRA has been allowed to exert undue influence and to date the communities of Brunswick, Harpswell and Topsham have been underrepresented and dismissed. A vote for this bill will ensure fair and equal representation of the community.

4. ****Environmental Covenants****: The bill requires all property held by the authority to be subject to the Uniform Environmental Covenants Act. The board of trustees must enter into covenants under this Act no later than January 1, 2027. This will help ensure that environmental safeguards are in place and adhered to. This aspect of the bill is necessary because PFAS Testing results of a well at the golf course on MRRA property at Brunswick Landing Exceeded 33ppt. There is information indicating the well had not been tested since 2021 and was not tested after the AFFF chemical disaster of August 2024. There are private homes using wells less than 1000 feet from that contaminated

well . To date, there has been no action initiated by MRRA to urge testing of those private wells. MRRA has arranged installation of a filtration system at the golf course for their tenant, however made no effort to help with a solution for those whose wells are destroyed, at risk of being destroyed or who are possibly drinking PFAS contaminated water without knowing.

5. ****Site Location of Development Laws****: The bill removes the exemption currently granted to former military bases from the site location of development laws. This change is vital for ensuring that all developments are subject to the same rigorous environmental standards. At a Public MRRA Airport Master Plan meeting ,April 16, 2025 the developer for MRRA announced they plan to release, get rid of parcels surrounding the runway that they no longer need. This is a CERCLA Superfund Site. There are Land Use Laws/controls and one cannot just release parcels known to be contaminated with PFAS. This painfully irresponsible and uninformed statement is an example of why MRRA in its current iteration cannot remain. Another example can be seen on MRRA property in Brunswick. MRRA has allowed digging/dirt from a contaminated CERCLA parcel of land to be moved and deposited into 3 gigantic piles outside apartment buildings. These three piles are 4 stories high, (photos submitted with testimony) have not been tested, they are not covered, the dirt blows around the environment, residents cannot and should not use their outdoor spaces or balconies (for which they pay high rent) for fear of exposure to PFAS and other toxic contaminants. Children have been playing on these dirt mounds and bike tracks can be seen as well. There is no signage, no warning and no responsibility has been taken to keep the community safe.

Photos of 4 story mounds of dirt:





In conclusion, Maine Bill LD1637 is a necessary step towards greater environmental responsibility, accountability, and community representation. The painful experiences my family , neighbors and the community have endured and will continue to endure highlight the importance of these changes. I urge you to support this bill and help protect our environment and communities from future harm.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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