

Testimony in Support of LD 2141, *An Act to Direct a Portion of Unclaimed Beverage Container Deposits to the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund, and the Maine Working Farmland Access and Protection Program*

Before the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

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Good afternoon, Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of LD 2141, *An Act to Direct a Portion of Unclaimed Beverage Container Deposits to the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund, and the Maine Working Farmland Access and Protection Program*.

My name is Laura Diemer. I am a senior project manager at FB Environmental Associates (FBE), a mission-based, environmental consulting firm specializing in environmental planning, assessment, and restoration for New England waterbodies and their communities, largely in Maine and New Hampshire. The company was founded 25 years ago by Forrest Bell, a Maine native, and our primary office is located in Portland, ME. I also grew up in Scarborough, ME and currently live in Lebanon, ME with my husband and two children.

I have worked as a limnologist for over 15 years on several dozen projects related to water quality monitoring and watershed management planning for New England lakes. I am also a Certified Lake Manager (CLM), a recognition given by the North American Lake Management Society (NALMS). Under this designation, I provide expertise in in-lake treatment planning and permitting for those lakes suffering from potentially-toxic cyanobacteria blooms.

The work that I do through FBE is crucial for lake protection and restoration. We provide the technical expertise necessary for designing and carrying out water quality monitoring programs, analyzing data to determine water quality challenges, developing models for estimating pollutant sources and predicting water quality, conducting field surveys to identify areas contributing disproportionate amounts of pollutants to lakes, facilitating community input on the threats and solutions to water quality challenges, and integrating these efforts into a watershed management plan that serves as a roadmap for communities to take tangible action for protecting or improving water quality in their lakes.

As a limnologist, I have witnessed profound and accelerating changes in our lakes in recent years. These changes are no longer subtle—they are widespread, visible, and deeply concerning. We are seeing increasing pressures from nutrient and chloride pollution from human activities, along with a marked rise in harmful cyanobacteria blooms. At the same time, climate change has pushed us into a new era where warmer waters, more extreme and unpredictable precipitation, and longer growing seasons favor cyanobacteria—even in lakes that are considered high quality and low nutrient. The climate will only continue to become more erratic and extreme. Many lakes have already reached their tipping points and suffer from water quality challenges. We are seeing the effects of these water quality challenges on recreation and the economy, so maintaining the status quo with our lakes is no longer sustainable.

Our lakes are under threat, and the demand for lake protection and restoration efforts will only continue to grow, along with the need for funding. Lake funding options in Maine are critically limited, which has crippled our ability to effectively address water quality challenges and has left our communities more vulnerable to health crises and recreational and economic loss. Other states, such as New Hampshire, have demonstrated what is possible by leveraging their Clean Water State Revolving Fund to support watershed planning through loans with up to \$100,000 in principal forgiveness and by establishing a dedicated Cyanobacteria Mitigation Fund to support implementation work. By creating a sustainable funding source for lake

work, this bill will be transformative for the State of Maine and would have incredible lasting benefits for lakes and their communities across the State.

I strongly urge you to support this bill to protect Maine's lakes for generations to come. We are fortunate to steward some of the cleanest and clearest lakes in the country, but our clean waters are a privilege, not a guarantee. Gratitude for our clean waters must be matched with action to protect them. This bill provides a meaningful step toward protecting the lakes that define Maine.

Thank you for your time and consideration.