

February 11, 2026

Good morning, Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and esteemed members of the Environment and Natural Resources committee. My name is Bella Sturtevant and I am a resident of Leeds, Maine and a member of the Wabanaki Youth Policy Coalition with the Wabanaki Alliance and Maine Environmental Education Association. I am writing today in support of LD 2070: An Act to Prohibit Landfill Expansion into Wetlands. This bill will prohibit the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) from issuing permits or licenses that would allow landfill expansion to fill or otherwise alter freshwater wetlands. It closes a clear gap in current law, which does not explicitly prevent landfill expansions from destroying wetlands even when those wetlands provide critical habitat and water quality functions.

The proposed Phase II expansion at Juniper Ridge would add dozens of acres of new landfill and related infrastructure and permanently fill several acres of freshwater wetlands. At least one of these wetlands is a Wetland of Special Significance, and others are important because they contain Significant Vernal Pools and critical habitat. Current law still allows these sensitive wetlands to be destroyed for landfill expansion, which is exactly what this bill would prevent. Wetlands around Juniper Ridge help soak up stormwater, filter pollution, and protect nearby aquifers, streams, and the Penobscot River. Experts have warned that expanding JRL increases risks to groundwater and surface water, especially if heavy rain or liner problems increase leachate movement. Reducing landfill expansion into wetlands is a clear way to limit leachate, protect drinking water, and support a healthier Penobscot River.

People in Old Town and the Penobscot Indian Nation have repeatedly said that more expansion at Juniper Ridge adds to environmental burdens they already carry. They are worried about air pollution, leachate in the river, and health problems such as cancer and asthma. Blocking landfill

expansion into wetlands is one concrete step toward reducing these unequal impacts on low-income and tribal communities.

For these reasons; protecting wetlands and water, reducing pollution risks, respecting environmental justice, and supporting Maine's long-term waste policy, I respectfully urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 2070: An Act to Prohibit Landfill Expansion into Wetlands.