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LD 2174

Eliza Petrovits, Warren  
February 24, 2026  
Testimony in Opposition

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

I am submitting testimony in strong opposition to LD 2174, as amended, titled “An Act to Increase Predictability in the Permitting of Renewable Energy Development”. LD 2174 threatens the fundamental right of Maine municipalities to protect their own drinking water, farmland, and neighborhoods.

The towns of Union, Hope, and Warren know exactly what is at stake.

Several years ago, a metallic mineral mining company proposed a nickel mining operation directly within our watershed — in close proximity to Crawford Pond and the surrounding tributaries that feed our rivers, wells, farmland, and homes. This was not an abstract policy debate. This was a real proposal, in a real residential and watershed area, with very real risks.

Our communities educated themselves. We reviewed the science. We examined the documented dangers of metallic mineral mining, including acid mine drainage, heavy metal contamination, groundwater pollution, and long-term ecological damage. We considered the proximity to schools, houses, agricultural land, and private wells. We weighed the irreversible risks to drinking water and property values.

And then we did what Maine municipalities have always had the right to do: we acted.

Through lawful ordinance changes and open town vote, with strong community participation, our residents made a clear decision. We said no to industrial metallic mineral mining in our watershed and residential zones.

That decision was not anti-development. It was pro-water, pro-property rights, and pro-local self-government.

If this bill weakens municipal home rule authority or prevents towns from enacting regulations that are more protective than state minimums, communities like ours will lose the very tools that allowed us to safeguard Crawford Pond and our surrounding environment. We will be forced to accept projects that pose significant environmental and public health risks, even when local residents overwhelmingly oppose them.

Maine’s Constitution guarantees municipalities the authority to legislate in matters of local concern, subject to the Constitution and general law. Water protection, zoning, and land use regulation are the clearest examples of local concern imaginable.

Decisions about what happens in a town’s watershed should not be stripped from the people who drink that water.

Union, Hope, and Warren are proof that local democracy works. We engaged respectfully, we followed the law, and we made a community decision to protect our watershed from acid mine drainage, heavy metal pollution, and industrial impacts that could have altered our towns forever.

If municipalities lose the ability to adopt stricter protections when necessary, we will be in serious trouble. Companies with significant financial resources will be able to target rural communities, knowing local voters no longer have meaningful authority to defend themselves.

That is not how Maine has historically governed itself. And it is not a direction we should move toward now.

I urge you to oppose this bill and preserve the ability of municipalities to protect their own water, land, and residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Eliza Petrovits  
Warren