

Testimony in Support of LD 536
An Act to Provide Natural Organic Reduction Facilities for Maine
Residents for the Conversion of Human Remains to Soil
Steven Weems, Resident of Brunswick, Maine
To the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
March 30, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and other distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Steve Weems, a resident of Brunswick, Maine. Usually I'm across the hall at the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee, volunteering on behalf of the Solar Energy Association of Maine. Today I appear as an individual with a great interest in the subject of LD 536. I fervently hope you can find a way to report it out favorably, which would allow me and other members of my family to become customers of a facility offering natural organic reduction when we "shuffle off this mortal coil." Thank you to Representative Doudera and her cosponsors for bringing it forward.

As a lone individual, I will be brief. Please know, however, that my plea for support of LD 536 is heartfelt.

I've been composting for over 50 years, professionally and personally. I've experienced composting as a spiritually satisfying, natural organic reduction physical and chemical process. The organic residuals have great benefits as a natural soil amendment. Done properly, natural organic reduction would be an affirming way for living family and friends to celebrate the cycle of life, knowing that selecting this choice was soothing to the departed individual.

My dear mother passed away 28 years ago. Like many sons, I wish I had loved her more demonstratively when she was alive. Yet her spiritual presence continues as a great source of well-being. When she died, my youngest brother, in charge of an arboretum, dedicated a young fern-leaf beech tree to her, and nourished this tree with some of her ashes. Then a living cutting from this tree made its way to Maine, and took root in our back yard. Now this offspring is a beautiful juvenile tree, displaying, to me at least, the essence of my mother's gentleness, talent, and good will towards all living things. With this tree as a daily physical reminder, she continues to provide guidance and loving comfort.

What do I wish? I would like to be able to instruct my spouse and two sons we brought into this world to compost my remains via the process of natural organic reduction that would be authorized by LD 536. Then celebrate my life by adding the remaining organic material to the soil around my mother's memorial tree, here in Maine. It's a simple wish that could be granted by enacting LD 536, with whatever improvements may be appropriate. Regarding technical details, I'll defer to others with more expertise and jurisdiction, including members of the Committee.

It would be a great comfort to contemplate this natural disposal of my remains while I'm still around, as I'm sure it would be to other people as well. It would be a blessing to add a sustainable, natural option of this nature to the limited choices currently available. Thank you for your service and consideration.