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THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

Testimony of Senator Richard Bennett
before the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
LD 1471 "An Act to Amend Provisions of the Maine Metallic Mineral Mining Act"
April 13, 2023

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources: I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford, and I have the honor of serving 14 communities in Western Maine in the State Senate. I am pleased to sponsor LD 1471, "An Act to Amend Provisions of the Maine Metallic Mineral Mining Act."

This legislation was brought to me by my constituent, Dr. Bruce Taylor of Sweden. Like all of us, Dr. Taylor is concerned about the human health impacts caused by mining and wants to make sure they are taken into proper consideration as the Legislature considers the many changes to Maine's mining laws being proposed this year. It is my understanding that many of the health provisions in this legislation are currently in department rule. LD 1471 would elevate these provisions to statute.

As you know, I have personally been a strong advocate for PFAS mitigation. One element of LD 1471 would prohibit the Department of Environmental Protection from issuing a mining permit for a mining operation that will involve or result in the release of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances into the air, soil, groundwater or surface water within any mining area or affected area. Maine has taken great strides to prevent continued PFAS contamination; it only makes sense to ensure any future mining operation does not cause it.

Another part of the bill would require an applicant for a mining permit to submit a human health impact assessment for the proposed mining operation that identifies all potential emissions and effects from the mining operation in a proposed mining area and affected area that can reasonably be expected to cause or threaten harm to human health. There should be a baseline measure prior to exposure, and then comparisons should be made after the mining process begins to properly examine the effects of the project.

LD 1471 has many elements and I trust the committee to do good due diligence as you work through this legislation and the others before you. I ask for your thoughtful consideration, and leave it in your hands to consider this bill separately or include its elements into a more comprehensive vehicle. Thank you.