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Senator, District 21

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

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**Testimony introducing
LD 1473, "An Act to Protect Certain Unfiltered Drinking Water Sources"**

**Senator Peggy Rotundo
May 1, 2023**

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and other distinguished members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Peggy Rotundo and I represent Senate District 21, the City of Lewiston. I am here today to introduce **LD 1473, "An Act to Protect Certain Unfiltered Drinking Water Sources"**.

Currently there are 10 public drinking water sources in Maine that enjoy the Environmental Protection Agency filtration waivers because of their exceptional water quality. There are only 40 bodies of water in the entire United States that enjoy waivers and 10 of them are in Maine. These Maine sources of water are treasures. Not only do they supply excellent water to the municipalities that depend upon them, but they also save the taxpayers in these cities and towns the cost of very expensive filtration systems.

This bill is designed to create protections for these sensitive drinking water sources in Maine that face additional development pressure as the result of legislation signed into law in the 130th Legislation session (LD 2003). My bill attempts to provide protection to these water sources by exempting them from the additional development allowances granted through LD 2003. The purpose of the bill is to protect these sources of municipal drinking water from the kind of high density development that could jeopardize the quality of the water as well as the filtration waivers and the water rate savings that come through having a filtration waiver.

For many of these communities, the quality and affordability of this drinking water are currently at stake. If communities are not at a tipping point now, most will be in the future unless some action is taken now.

I know that concerns have been raised about the impact of exempting the watersheds from requirements designed to promote affordable housing in LD 2003. As a strong advocate for affordable housing, I would say that it was never the intention of those who supported and continue to support the spirit of LD 2003 to promote development in highly sensitive ecological systems like these watersheds. There is a way to promote affordable housing and at the same time protect the quality of drinking water in our state, both of which are critical to the wellbeing of the people of Maine and our state's future.

I would share the bodies of water with waivers of filtration. They are Lake Auburn, Sebago Lake, Sebago Lake-East, Eagle Lake, Floods Pond, Hatcase Pond, Little Pond, Lower Hadlock Pond, Jordan Pond, and Aroostook River/Arnold Lake Brook. These bodies of water serve the roughly 200,000 people living in the communities of Lewiston, Auburn, Poland, Portland, Raymond, Casco, Sebago, Frye Island, Bangor, Brewer, Damariscotta, Presque Isle, Bar Harbor, and Mount Desert.

Thank you for considering this bill to protect the watersheds of these few remaining drinking water sources in Maine that have filtration waivers and that are threatened. We are very lucky that we have these treasured bodies of water here in Maine. I hope to work with all of you to craft a bill that will help ensure protection of these precious resources now and into the future. I will do my best to answer any questions you might have.