



Solutions for a
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Director of Advocacy, Defend Our Health
In Support of LD 1473 “An Act to Protect Certain Unfiltered Drinking Water Sources”
Before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee
May 1, 2023

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the director of advocacy for Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health’s mission is to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food and drinking water, healthy homes and products that are toxic-free and climate friendly. I am here to testify in support of LD 1473 “An Act to Protect Certain Unfiltered Drinking Water Sources”.

LD 1473 would exempt lakes like Lake Auburn and other lakes with filtration waivers from the additional development requirements that were passed last session under LD 2003, the affordable housing act. This would help protect areas of these lakes from development that may contaminate the sensitive water supplies. While we are fully in support of making housing more affordable for all Mainers, we do need to make sure that we are taking into account the effects that high density housing may have on some of our most delicate drinking water systems. The water quality of these sources and their current filtration waivers are threatened by a law allowing increased state-wide development without consideration of the effect on these watersheds.

Very few water supplies are granted waivers of filtration by the Environmental Protection Agency. In fact, only 40 water supplies have been granted this waiver and, due our abundant and pristine drinking water sources, Maine has been granted 9 out of the 40 waivers. These filtration waivers prevent local taxpayers from bearing the costs of extremely expensive water filtration systems and helps keep the rates low for the communities that have these filtration waivers. In fact, communities with these filtration waivers have some of the lowest rates in the state. A loss of this waiver would cause the rates for those communities to more than double.

The impacts of climate change along with the current levels of runoff from current development may lead to the loss of the filtration waiver down the road but, exempting these communities from additional development now will give the communities more time to plan for an intentional transition and save taxpayers money. We must ensure that we protect the safety and affordability of these water sources for as long as possible.

Access to safe drinking water is a basic human right. We must make sure that these unique drinking water sources are protected for as long as possible. Limiting development along the shorelines of these communities with waivers of filtration will help protect vital drinking water sources. Therefore, Defend urges the committee to unanimously vote “ought to pass” on Ld 1473,