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Testimony of Representative Ambureen Rana introducing

LD 1073, An Act to Amend Provisions of the Maine Metallic Mining Mineral Act to Advance Health Equity and Improve the Well Being of Vulnerable Populations
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Good morning Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and distinguished members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Representative Ambureen Rana, and I have the honor of representing House District 21, which includes the City of Bangor.

I am here today to introduce **LD 1073, An Act to Amend Provisions of the Maine Metallic Mining Mineral Act to Advance Health Equity and Improve the Well Being of Vulnerable Populations.**

The story of Maine's "most environmentally protective" metallic mining regulations in the country is, to date, an untested one with a significant vulnerability, as it does not include clear public health warnings, guidelines and protections.

Mining has earned a well-known reputation of being the most polluting and destructive of human activities on the planet. It's not a matter of if a metallic mine will pollute, but when. With improved regulations, we may yet turn metallic mining's unfavorable reputation around and have an industry that is more mutually beneficial as it tries to set roots in Maine. The external costs of mining should not impose negative health impacts nor outcomes on local populations. If we are to have a clean energy transition, it is up to us to ensure that public health is protected so we can promote clean energy as being clean, and therefore ensure a just transition to renewable energy.

This proposed bill:

- Provides for a comprehensive baseline health assessment for mining communities prior to initiation of mining operations, requiring periodic revaluation.
- Provides more information so that communities better understand the risks from potential exposure to toxic materials.

- Requires that there is adequate monitoring of toxic waste after closure. The monitoring will occur for as long as the danger of contamination persists and not terminate at an arbitrary date while the toxic waste may still be harmful.
- Requires insurance coverage for any pollution-related health event occurring in communities affected by mining.
- Prevents a disaster before it happens, not after the fact as has occurred, like in other mining catastrophes.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Dr. Taylor, who will testify after me, will have more information on the specifics of the human health hazards. He is a physician with fellowship training in the effects of metals in genetics and metabolism. I am happy to answer your questions.



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Metallic mining can cause serious health problems through air and water pollution, including respiratory illnesses, neurological damage, and increased cancer risk, stemming from exposure to heavy metals like lead, mercury, and arsenic.

Here's a more detailed breakdown of the health impacts:

Respiratory Issues:

- **Silicosis:** Inhaling silica dust, a common element disturbed by mining, can lead to silicosis, a debilitating and irreversible lung disease.
- **Other Respiratory Conditions:** Exposure to mine dust and fine particles can trigger chronic respiratory conditions like asthma and bronchitis.
- **Metal Fume Fever:** High zinc exposure can lead to metal fume fever.

Neurological and Developmental Problems:

- Exposure to neurotoxic metals like arsenic, lead, and mercury can cause cognitive impairment, neurodevelopmental problems, and an increased risk of neurodegenerative diseases.

Developmental Issues:

- Exposure to heavy metals, particularly during fetal development, can lead to adverse birth outcomes and cognitive and behavioral problems in later childhood.

Cancer:

- **Increased Cancer Risk:** Chronic exposure to heavy metals can increase the risk of various cancers, including those of the trachea, bronchus, lung, stomach, and liver.
- **Specific Metal Toxicity:** Arsenic, cadmium, and other heavy metals are known carcinogens.

Other Health Problems:

- **Cardiovascular Issues:** Exposure to heavy metals can lead to cardiovascular problems.
- **Kidney Damage:** Exposure to mercury and other heavy metals can damage the kidneys.
- **Skeletal Problems:** Exposure to heavy metals can lead to skeletal problems.
- **Infectious Diseases:** Mining activities can increase the risk of insect-borne diseases like malaria.

- Acid Mine Drainage: The waste from mines can become acidic (acid mine drainage) and pollute ground and surface water, leading to further health problems.
- Contamination of Drinking Water: Mining operations can contaminate drinking water sources, leading to various health problems.

Human Health Risks:

- Communities near mining operations are at risk of exposure to heavy metals through air, water, and soil. Chronic exposure to these toxic elements can lead to a range of health problems, including neurological disorders, developmental issues in children, and an increased risk of cancer.