



Friends of Casco Bay Casco BAYKEEPER

April 10, 2025

Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Maine State Legislature
Cross Building, Room 228
Augusta, Maine
AFA@legislature.maine.gov

Re: *Friends of Casco Bay's Testimony in Support of LD 25: An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Fund Wastewater Treatment Facility Planning and Construction of Infrastructure Projects*

Dear Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and Distinguished Members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs,

Please accept Friends of Casco Bay's testimony in support of LD 25: An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Fund Wastewater Treatment Facility Planning and Construction of Infrastructure Projects and vote that this bill OUGHT TO PASS. This bond bill will help solve a problem created when the legislature properly banned the application of sludge on farm fields, once it learned that the sludge contained PFAS. Now the sludge is transported from wastewater treatment facilities (WWTFs) to landfills at great cost. Upon arrival, this heavy watery slurry proves unstable and rapidly fills remaining landfill space. This bond would finance digesters and dryers to diminish the volume and solidify the texture of the sludge. It may also allow treatments to reduce the levels of PFAS in the sludge.

For over 35 years, Friends of Casco Bay has worked to improve and protect the environmental health of Casco Bay. We collect and analyze scientific data to inform actions that keep Casco Bay healthy. In carrying out this work, we have developed strong relationships with the operators of WWTFs that discharge into the Casco Bay watershed. These WWTFs play a major role in reducing pollution to our waters, and do so with lean budgets dependent on local, state and federal dollars.

Maine's WWTFs already face a serious backlog of repair and upgrade needs. The eight WWTFs that discharge to Casco Bay's watershed alone report operations and maintenance needs of \$472.9 million dollars. That is only part of the \$1.7 billion backlog for all Maine's WWTFs. Add to this, the need to now spend more to dispose of sludge.

Sludge is generated during the wastewater treatment process. Historically, farmers spread sludge to fertilize their fields. A few years ago, this legislature banned that practice after learning that sludge contained PFAS, and had contaminated farm fields and products such as milk. WWTFs then had to turn to the only other sludge disposal option available—sending it to landfills. Landfills, such as Juniper Ridge, are struggling to accept this sludge because it is wet, unstable and voluminous. To stabilize it, sludge is mixed with bulky waste. This creates two further problems: (1) Maine does not generate enough bulky

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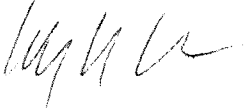
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waste to mix with sludge, and (2) sludge is rapidly filling our landfills, shortening the time until they reach capacity.

This bond would allocate funds to reduce the volume and change the consistency of sludge. For example, dryers could remove the moisture, shrinking the amount of waste produced and eliminating the need to stabilize it with bulky waste. It also would provide funding for other solutions to minimize sludge waste and potentially explore reducing PFAS in the waste. This \$50 million bond proposal is a small sum compared to the overall needs of WWTFs, but if used wisely, will have an outsized beneficial impact. The structure of this bond, with DEP oversight, will ensure that the funds will be wisely distributed and used.

For the foregoing reasons, we urge this committee to vote that LD 25 OUGHT TO PASS.

Respectfully submitted,



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MANAGING WASTEWATER SLUDGE A SMART INVESTMENT FOR MAINE

A Bond to Improve Disposal of PFAS-Laden Sludge to Protect Public Health

Like many states, Maine once allowed treated wastewater sludge to be spread on farm fields as fertilizer. After discovering the sludge contained PFAS, Maine banned this practice to protect public health. Now, wastewater treatment plants need support to manage this waste. A proposed state bond would fund the installation of technology such as dryers and digesters to stabilize sludge consistency, and reduce volume and the risk of contamination—avoiding issues like those at Juniper Ridge Landfill last year.

Why This Bond Is Needed

- **Protects Public Health:** Wastewater sludge is one of many products that contain PFAS, which have been linked to serious health risks. Maine led the nation in banning sludge use on farm fields to prevent contamination of food and water, but disposal remains a challenge.
- **Reduces Pressure on Landfills:** With no land application, all sludge goes to landfills, which have limited space. Sludge is heavy, wet, and unstable, like goopy clay—making it difficult to handle and taking up significant space.
- **Helps Maine's taxpayers and wastewater treatment facilities:** Rising sludge disposal costs burden treatment plants, which are in part funded by us as taxpayers. Without proper management, PFAS can contaminate the environment including soils, groundwater, rivers, and coastal waters.



Sludge digesters

How the Bond Helps

- **Funds Proven Technology:** Wastewater treatment plants can install technology such as dryers and digesters to reduce sludge volume and improve disposal.
- **Supports Innovation:** Pilot programs can test alternative sludge management strategies.
- **Ensures Safe Waste Management:** Better sludge treatment prevents contamination in local waters.

A Common-Sense Solution Using Proven Technology

- **Developed with Expert Input:** The Maine Department of Environmental Protection collaborated with wastewater professionals to shape this bond. Funding will be awarded based on need and impact.
- **Continues Maine's Leadership on PFAS:** This bond helps the state maintain its commitment to protecting public health, farmland, and water resources from toxic chemicals.
- **A Smart Investment for Maine:** This bond ensures wastewater facilities operate efficiently, reduce landfill strain, and safeguards communities and the environment.

INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE. PROTECTING MAINE'S FUTURE.

This bond provides a practical solution to a growing problem. It helps wastewater treatment facilities operate efficiently, reduces the burden on landfills, and keeps Maine's farmers, consumers, and environment safe.

For more information, please contact:

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