



Solutions for a
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Director of Advocacy, Defend Our Health
In Opposition to LD 297 "An Act Regarding the Management of Oversized Bulky Waste from
Wastewater Treatment Plants."
Before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee
April 28, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the vice president of policy and 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 opposition of LD 297 "An Act Regarding the Management of Oversized Bulky Waste from Wastewater Treatment Plants."

Much like LD 718 which this committee heard in the 131st legislative session, LD 297 once again opens up Maine to become the dumping ground for the rest of New England by allowing out of state waste to be shipped into our state and disposed of in Juniper Ridge Landfill (JRL), the state-run landfill. A landfill that is supposed to be used solely for in-state waste. But LD 297 takes it a step further by redefining "in-state waste" to include construction debris used for landfill cover, regardless of how much of it comes from out-of-state, undoing all of the protections put forward under LD 1639, which was passed in the 130th to protect Maine's valuable landfill space and the communities surrounding the landfill, including the Penobscot Nation, that are impacted daily by the toxic leachate coming off of JRL. This legislation is an affront to those communities.

We've heard the claims from Casella Waste Systems that this out of state bulky waste is necessary to stabilize the landfill due to increased sludge disposal. They increased costs on municipalities across the state during their first manufactured crisis, claiming that they need those funds for increased trucking costs to truck the PFAS-contaminated sludge out of state. They said that if the legislature passed LD 718, it would help lower the costs and that would help Maine taxpayers. I don't know about you, but my sewer bill hasn't gone down. In fact, before the manufactured sludge crisis in 2023, my bill was around \$102. After Casella raised the rates, it went up to about \$116 dollars. Now it's around \$139 dollars. So much for reducing the rates after being allowed to continue to contaminate Maine with waste from Massachusetts. Casella grosses over \$1 billion annually managing waste streams across the Northeast. In fact, an article in Yahoo! Finance states that that it's anticipated that Casella will see first quarter earnings for 2025 at around \$414M, a 20.9% year over year growth¹. That 20% is being

¹ Shankar Dey, S. (2025b, April 22). *3 waste removal firms poised to beat estimates this earnings season*. Yahoo! Finance. <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/3-waste-removal-firms-poised-180400763.html>



made on the backs of all Maine taxpayers who have seen their sewer rates increase over the past two years.

To ask for an additional three years to continue to import out-of-state waste to bulk up sludge is completely unnecessary. Crossroads landfill, which is not owned or operated by Casella but rather Waste Management, is in the process of voluntarily paying for and installing a sludge dryer to help reduce the sludge volumes going into the landfill. It is our understanding that, once it's up and running, it will be able to manage around 200 tons a day of sludge. This is about how much is trucked to JRL. Wet sludge could go to Crossroads as opposed to Juniper Ridge, negating the need for an increase in bulky waste to stabilize it. The facility at Crossroads should be up in running in 2026. Additionally, if passed, LD 25, the wastewater bond, would provide additional funding to wastewater treatment facilities to help manage their sludge volume.

We understand the frustrations of the wastewater districts. They are being put in a tough position and need solutions. It's unfortunate that the only solutions that the landfill managers are willing to even consider is pushing this legislation to overturn good public policy to help line their pockets. The voices of the communities that live near Juniper Ridge and are impacted by this legislation have been largely ignored. Once again, this is yet another example of frontline and indigenous communities being brushed aside for the sake of corporate profits. An all too familiar story. We urge the committee to protect those communities, not corporate profit and vote "ought not to pass" on LD 297.