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April 28, 2025

Honorable Denise Tepler, Senate Chair
Honorable Victoria Doudera, House Chair
Joint Legislative Committee on Environment & Natural Resources
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 297, An Act Regarding the Management of Oversized Bulky Waste from Wastewater Treatment Plants

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the ENR Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments in respectful Opposition to LD 297.

About myself: My name is Amanda Wade. I am a current resident of the City of Gardiner and a lifelong resident of the state of Maine. I am also a licensed Professional Engineer with an Environmental focus who has been working in the solid waste field for nearly 25 years. For full transparency, I started my career as an engineer at the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in the Solid Waste Engineering Unit providing technical support for permitting, inspection, and compliance of numerous landfills, processing facilities, transfer stations, and recycling facilities. I was the DEP's project engineer for the Juniper Ridge Landfill (initially the Old Town Landfill) and the Dolby Landfill from 2000 to 2015. In 2015, I left the DEP, have been a consulting engineer for approximately 10 years, and am currently a Solid Waste Program Manager for TRC. TRC was recently hired by the Bureau of General Services (BGS) to complete a study evaluating the amount of bulking waste required to, and available for, co-disposal with Maine's biosolids within our landfills. I am also the current President of the Northern New England Chapter of the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA). I am not here on behalf of any of these organizations, however, and only provide this information to show my level of experience regarding the topics before you today.

Bill Discussion: As you are aware the decision to halt land application of biosolids and, at least in the immediate future, direct all biosolids to Maine landfills while also redefining the process residues from Maine processing facilities that accept materials from other states as out-of-state waste, created a stability issue within Maine landfills. Biosolids, as they are sent to our landfills, are 80% liquids and require special handling within the landfill to ensure stability, allow for liquids to adequately drain, and provide for gas collection. In addition to

the high liquid content, biosolids are made up of fine particles that do not provide structure within the landfill. To maintain current landfill geometry, which allows for maximization of capacity, these wastes must be mixed with other larger particle materials. Just for a minute, imagine building mud pies as a kid, it was easy to get frustrated as the mud would find its own height, no matter how much you added. This is how sludge behaves within a landfill. It sets up with maximum slopes of 4 or 5 horizontal to 1 vertical, as opposed to the standard 3:1 slopes of our traditional landfills. Its tight structure does not drain well and limits the impacts of landfill gas collection systems. The larger bulky materials, when added to the sludge provide structure, like the rocks and sticks we used as kids. The sludge fills the voids created by the larger material and the larger materials serve to separate the finer particles and provide pathways for the liquids and gases to reach the control systems. Our landfill operators have decades of experience with the disposal practices needed for safe management of these materials.

Waste production within Maine is seasonal. During the winter months, the availability of bulky waste including Construction and Demolition Debris (CDD) is reduced as construction slows. Biosolids, however, are produced at a fairly consistent rate across the state. This consistent supply of sludge means that landfill operators require a consistent supply of bulking material (typically 4 times the quantity) to manage operations. Any reduction in bulking material can lead to issues within the landfill at current biosolids disposal needs.

While LD 297 intends to extend the availability of bulky waste until July of 2028 to meet the needs of our landfills, I believe this date was selected assuming other means of biosolids disposal and/or stabilization are brought online by that time. While this might help meet the needs of our landfills for now, imposing any restriction on the disposal of bulky waste or other residuals from our processing facilities, whether they must accept materials from other states or not, within Maine landfills may impact the ability of these facilities to maintain operations within Maine and meet the state's diversion goals.

As I mentioned above, waste availability within Maine is seasonal. Facilities that are located in Maine that process and recycle our waste streams may need to supplement with materials from southern New England to maintain operations during these periods of waste fluctuation. These facilities are, in fact, Maine businesses that must operate at a baseline to continue to pay staff, maintain compliance, and meet Maine's recycling needs. If, during these times, they are no longer allowed to dispose of waste materials within Maine landfills, it may become too expensive to continue operations in our state. If these facilities are forced to leave, we will have no one left to recycle our waste materials which would inevitably force waste back into landfills. MDEP has recycling goals for all processing facilities to help limit the amount of unrecyclable waste that moves through the facilities. Additionally, these facilities pay for disposal of waste material within landfills which reduces the profits they are able to make on recycling. They certainly do not want to bring waste into their facility that they will pay staff to separate and then pay to dispose. Maine is a large state with a relatively small population and should be evaluating how we can work regionally to meet everyone's diversion goals instead of continuing an isolation approach.

This anti-waste approach has led to a massive capacity crisis throughout New England with reliance upon transfer of waste to landfills in Pennsylvania and Ohio being sought as the remedy. We need to be proactive in our waste management and make sure that all of our decisions promote management of our waste within Maine.

Additionally, I respectfully request that you consider the impacts on all solid waste facilities when new bills are brought in front of this committee and when multiple bills are brought before you, please consider the combined impacts they may have, even though they may seem unrelated. The stability issue experienced at JRL following the passage of LD 1911 and LD1639 in 2022 was predictable and could have been avoided if evaluated collectively.

Conclusion: Thank you for your time and consideration in listening to my testimony today. As an Environmental Engineer in the state of Maine, I take pride in the work that I do to design options for safe environmentally protective waste management. I respectfully request that you vote LD 297 "ought not to pass" and instead consider an indefinite extension to allow landfills to operate as needed to manage our biosolids disposal needs and not restrict the current and future waste processing facilities from meeting their disposal needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda S Wade". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amanda S Wade, PE