



**Testimony in Opposition to LD 297,
An Act Regarding the Management of Oversized Bulky Waste from Wastewater Treatment
Plants**

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Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Vanessa Berry. I am the Sustainable Maine Program Manager for the Natural Resources Council of Maine. I appreciate this opportunity to testify in opposition to LD 297.

Landfills are a necessary part of modern waste management. They serve as an unavoidable destination for waste that cannot be diverted, recycled, or otherwise recovered. Because of the importance of landfills within Maine's solid waste management system, we must be very thoughtful about how we use and manage them so that landfill capacity is available well into the future without needless expansions.

By law, Maine's State-owned landfills are prohibited from accepting waste generated outside of Maine. This protection was put in place to preserve our limited landfill capacity for in-state waste and to prevent Maine from becoming a dumping ground for the rest of New England – which was starting to happen.

This clear State policy that serves the interests of Maine people has long been at odds with the interests of large, regional waste corporations that profit from long-hauling materials to far-off landfills—including Juniper Ridge in Old Town—and filling our State-owned facilities with out-of-state waste.

For years, Casella, the operator of Juniper Ridge Landfill, exploited a loophole in Maine law that allowed out-of-state bulky waste and construction and demolition debris (CDD) to enter Maine under the guise of recycling. Materials brought here for processing were classified as "residue" and redefined as Maine waste after being minimally processed in state. This has placed a constant and growing strain on our State-owned landfill.

Recognizing this problem, the 130th Legislature voted in 2022 to close the loophole and limit the state's intake of out-of-state waste. Yet, Casella has resisted compliance, offering excuses rather than solutions, particularly around the management of wastewater treatment sludge. Meanwhile, other companies have demonstrated that practical alternatives are possible, including sludge-drying projects such as the one under development at the Waste Management facility in Norridgewock. If others can innovate, why can't Casella—the company we have entrusted to manage our state's landfill?

Seemingly endless landfill expansions, continued loopholes, and postponed deadlines – at the expense of Maine taxpayers and communities – will not incentivize Casella to develop good-faith solutions. We do not support LD 297 as written, because the proposed multi-year delay in closing the loophole on dumping out-of-state waste at Juniper Ridge seems to be driven mostly by Casella's financial interests, and not the public interest.

We urge the Committee to uphold the decision that the 130th Legislature made in 2022 to close the loophole. Only if Casella can prove beyond a reasonable doubt that no other solutions exist to stabilize wastewater sludge should a **very short-term** extension to allow the intake of stabilizing material be considered—and only to the extent necessary until alternative solutions are fully operational.

Thank you for your dedication to sustainable waste management in Maine. I would be happy to answer any questions now or ahead of the work session.