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THE MAINE SENATE  
132nd Legislature

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**Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources on  
LD 1349, "An Act to Require Legislative Approval for a Contract to Operate  
the Juniper Ridge Landfill"**

**April 28, 2025**

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources: I am Senator Rick Bennett of Oxford, and I have the honor of serving 14 communities in Western Maine in the State Senate. I am here in strong support LD 1349, "An Act to Require Legislative Approval for a Contract to Operate the Juniper Ridge Landfill."

For over two decades, the operation of the Juniper Ridge Landfill—a public asset purchased by the people of Maine—has been controlled by a single private corporation: New England Waste Services of Maine (NEWSME), LLC, a subsidiary of Casella Waste Systems. That arrangement, formed through a 30-year contract in 2003, granted Casella extraordinary monopoly power over Maine's waste system, and we've seen the consequences. The agreement was poorly structured and has allowed the company to exploit this state-owned facility for private profit, not public good.

LD 1349 does one simple but powerful thing: it ensures that the next long-term contract for Juniper Ridge receives legislative scrutiny and approval. It gives Maine's Legislature—not just state agencies—the opportunity to ask tough questions, demand transparency, and hold any operator accountable to Maine people.

And we need that now more than ever. Casella's behavior in recent years—and even today--has made it painfully clear that their interest lies in maximizing profit, not preserving Maine's waste capacity or supporting our towns. They are currently resisting a law we passed—LD 1639—to stop the influx of out-of-state construction and demolition debris, material they insist is "necessary" to stabilize PFAS-contaminated sludge. But let's be honest: this isn't about necessity. It's about money. It's about trucking in old couches from Massachusetts to pad their bottom line, not solve our environmental crisis.

This landfill was never meant to become a regional dumping ground. It was purchased by the state to serve Maine's long-term needs, to preserve capacity for our people. Casella has twisted our intent, undermined our laws, and used their market power to threaten municipalities with higher fees if they don't comply.

Here's another example of their lack of integrity. They know very well that the landfill was for more "special wastes" and not intended to allow municipal solid waste (MSW), but as a temporary measure to ease the transition from the closure of the Biddeford Waste-to-Energy

facility, Casella has accepted up to 81,800 tons of raw MSW per year since 2014—well beyond the original intent of the state’s ownership. DEP approved an extension of that permit on March 31, 2018, effectively rewarding Casella for failing to find an alternative home for the waste “stranded” by the facility’s closure. This has given Casella haulers an unfair market advantage over other waste companies, and once again, we’ve responded with more exceptions—rewarding failure instead of enforcing responsibility.

This cannot continue. We must not allow another 30-year contract to be signed without full legislative oversight. LD 1349 is about rebalancing power, reclaiming public control, and demanding that any future operator of Juniper Ridge serve the people of Maine—not just their shareholders.

I urge you to vote Ought to Pass.

Thank you.