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## Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 1349

*An Act to Require Legislative Approval for a Contract to Operate the Juniper Ridge Landfill*

Dana Colihan, Co-Executive Director | April 28th, 2025

Good morning Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and Members of the Environment & Natural Resources Committee,

My name is Dana Colihan, I am Co-Executive Director of Slingshot. I am testifying in support of LD 1349 with Senator Tipping's amendment. Slingshot is an environmental health and justice organization, working alongside communities most impacted by environmental threats to take aim at polluters and build community power. We believe everyone deserves the right to breathe clean air, drink clean water, and live in healthy, vibrant communities, which is why we are testifying in support of this bill.

LD 1349 would require legislative approval for any contract renewal of the state-owned Juniper Ridge Landfill (JRL). The state is currently in a 30-year contract with Casella to manage JRL, with a little less than 10 years remaining. This bill is a critical step to restoring democratic oversight.

For the past two decades Casella has had a monopoly over waste management in Maine. This has had serious consequences – turning Maine into a dumping ground for out of state waste, squandering valuable landfill capacity far faster than needed, and unjustly burdening the Penobscot Nation and surrounding communities.

For the past two decades – residents, environmental organizations, and legislators have questioned Casella's ability to manage the landfill. With good reason – **Casella has been a bad actor in Maine, with a track record of regulatory and environmental infractions across the region.**

Over the past five years, Casella has violated environmental laws at their facilities in Bethlehem, NH; Southbridge, MA; and Seneca, NY. Casella's violations across the region demonstrate their lack of competence to operate any facilities, let alone extend their contract in Maine.

Furthermore, **Casella impedes Maine's waste management hierarchy and recycling goals.** Our waste hierarchy statute states landfilling is the *last* resort, and yet Casella charges exorbitant recycling fees that work against our goals. The company profits over a billion dollars annually, capitalizing on increased waste disposal at Juniper Ridge.

We need to be building toward a zero waste future, where we are meaningfully reorienting how we manage resources and materials upstream. We need significant waste reduction, composting, recycling, and industrial redesign for healthier communities and a healthier environment. These waste management goals are at-odds with a company that profits from maximizing waste disposal.

Rather than allowing the state to get trapped in another unusually long contract with Casella, **LD 1349 protects public interest over private profit by implementing legislative oversight.**

This is not unheard of – Maine currently requires legislative approval on certain energy projects like new transmission lines.

We hope you take decisive action to protect our communities and environment by voting to pass. Thank you.