



**Testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 1349,
An Act to Require Legislative Approval for a Contract to Operate the Juniper Ridge
Landfill**

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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 provide comments neither for nor against LD 1349.

At NRCM, we believe that thoughtful, agency-driven processes are essential for making sound, science-based decisions about Maine's natural resources. In general, we are cautious about shifting technical permitting or contract decisions to the Legislature, as it could slow down important work, politicize environmental protections, and make it difficult to establish a consistent standard for when legislative approvals are required.

However, it is impossible to ignore the reality we face today at the Juniper Ridge Landfill. Maine's long-term contract with Casella Waste Systems has not served the people, environment, or communities of our state well. Casella has too often put its financial interests ahead of the public interest, disregarded the voices of nearby communities—including the Penobscot Nation—and used its monopoly position to dictate pricing with little accountability. Juniper Ridge is a public asset, and it deserves to be managed with transparency, care, and respect for the health of Maine people and the environment.

It is understandable that LD 1349 was introduced in response to these ongoing concerns. We cannot afford another 30 years of business as usual. The stakes are too high.

If the Committee shares these concerns but is hesitant to fully require legislative approval for landfill contracts, then we would suggest an alternative approach: The Legislature could create clear statutory criteria to guide the selection, contracting, and oversight of future landfill operators. These standards could include:

- Price caps or cost-control mechanisms to protect Maine municipalities
- Strong transparency requirements for reporting waste tonnage, types, and financials
- Closure of the loophole that allows out-of-state waste to flood our landfill
- Oversight measures to safeguard public health and environmental quality, including fire prevention, leachate management, and sludge stabilization
- Public disclosure of lobbying and political contributions
- Standards that prioritize waste reduction and landfill longevity

Landfills are a finite resource. Once full, we face expensive and environmentally harmful consequences—either expanding facilities or shipping our waste elsewhere. We owe it to Maine communities, and to future generations, to manage this resource carefully.

We should not continue to allow a profit-driven corporation with a troubling track record to operate Maine's State-owned landfill without much stronger oversight and accountability measures.

NRCM would be happy to work with the Committee to help shape common-sense criteria that will better protect Maine's environment, economy, and communities.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to safeguarding Maine's natural resources. I would be happy to answer any questions.