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THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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**Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources on
LD 757, Resolve, to Study and Oversee Water in the State of Maine
April 29, 2025**

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Esteemed Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee: 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 proud to sponsor LD 757, "Resolve, to Study and Oversee Water in the State of Maine".

As we all know, Maine's waters are one of the most distinctive and important resources in our state, and protecting this asset is of critical importance to the future of Maine people. We are specially blessed in Maine to have reliably pure and abundant water – something that is not available in many other parts of the world.

As returning members to this committee may remember, the 130th Legislature established a Commission To Study the Role of Water as a Resource in the State of Maine. The Commission asked a group of 16 individuals to give up their time and share their expertise to study the use and delivery of water resources including:

- The extent of water resources available in the State;
- Legal principles regarding the ownership of water resources in the State;
- The extent to which water resources will be needed in the State and nation in the future for household, government, business, commercial and other purposes;
- The quality of available water resources and the need for measures to protect water quality;
- The extent of transportation of water within the State and exportation of water from the State;
- The sustainability of aquifers within the State;
- The nature and use of natural resource extraction taxes in other states and the advantages and disadvantages of enacted natural resource extraction taxes in the State; and
- The relationship between water resources and climate change in the State, including an analysis of what actions other states are taking on this issue.

The Commission met five times but was tasked with so much work that commission's top recommendation was establishing a new, more focused commission to address the unresolved work. Commission members finalized their work in 2022 but felt it had been "rushed" and "incomplete." LD 757 puts those recommendations into legislation.

To summarize, LD 757 re-establishes the Commission to Study the Role of Water as a Resource in the State of Maine to develop findings and recommendations, including any suggested legislation, to ensure that there is adequate clean, safe, and accessible drinking water for the State's residents and to meet the needs of commercial and business interests

now and in the future. This study is designed to build off the work of the Commission to Study the Role of Water as a Resource in the State of Maine that was established pursuant to Resolve 2021, chapter 185. The commission is also required to review proposed major substantive rules regarding the transfer of a permit or contract in the sale of assets of an entity engaged in the exporting from the State of water extracted in the State and making recommendations, if any.

I want to note that this bill does need an amendment. Under the reporting requirement, the legislation says the Commission shall submit its report to the Committee on Taxation. This is an error; the report should be submitted to this committee.

It also requires the Maine Drinking Water Commission to adopt major substantive rules regarding the transfer of a permit or contract in the sale of assets of an entity engaged in the exporting from the State of water extracted in the State and to submit the proposed rules to the Commission to Study the Role of Water as a Resource in the State of Maine established under this bill for review before submitting the proposed rules for legislative review.

Establishing these rules is essential. It is irrational for anyone to think that he can predict a community's water needs 50 years from now. We must have a policy in place so our constituents and our natural resources are not taken advantage of in the future. One need look no further than to our nation's west to see what happens when water gets scarce.

I believe LD 757 will ensure that policymakers have the data, the analysis, the disclosure, and other tools necessary for Maine to protect our waters well into the future. Thank you. I encourage you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 757.