



STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY  
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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT  
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

IN OPPOSITION TO

*LD 757, Resolve, to Study and Oversee Water in the State of Maine*

And

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST

*LD 1696, Resolve, to Study Maine's Absolute Dominion and Beneficial Use Laws Relating to Water Rights*

April 29, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Ryan Gordon. I am the State Geologist and Director of the Maine Geological Survey. I am speaking on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) in opposition to LD 757, *Resolve, to Study and Oversee Water in the State of Maine* and neither for nor against LD 1696, *Resolve, to Study Maine's Absolute Dominion and Beneficial Use Laws Relating to Water Rights*.

Both of these bills would create a legislative Commission to study various aspects of Maine's water resources. LD 757 would have a mandate to look at several issues broadly related to water resources data, legal water rights, and government water regulation, while LD 1696 would be more narrowly focused on legal water rights. Both proposed Commissions would include a member representing the State Geologist from DACF.

In 2022, I served on a similar Commission to Study the Role of Water as a Resource in the State of Maine (Resolves 2021, ch. 185). The State Geologist also leads the permanent Water Resources Planning Committee (WRPC) in DACF (5 M.R.S. §6401), which has a similar set of duties to the Commission proposed by LD 757.

As State Geologist, I am prepared to serve in either of the commissions proposed in these two bills; however, DACF would also like to point out several potential downsides. The Commission envisioned by LD 757 would duplicate much of the work already done by the WRPC or would consider much of the same issues considered during the 2022 Commission. The time available for any Commission to function between legislative sessions is short. In our experience, it is insufficient to tackle many of the issues proposed, which are often controversial and complex.

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Serving on a commission also demands time and resources for the participants, such as the Maine Water Utilities Association, which testified against the bill creating the 2022 Commission. For these reasons, we are opposed to the commission proposed in LD 1757 and suggest that any new commission be given a narrower set of duties that might be more manageable to undertake within the given constraints.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions now or at the work session.