



mrwa

MAINE RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION

PO BOX 263 • 254 ALEXANDER REED RD
RICHMOND, ME 04357
PHONE: 207-737-4092 • FAX: 207-737-7150
E-MAIL: MRWA@MAINERWA.ORG
WEBSITE: WWW.MAINERWA.ORG

To: Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

From: Bradley Sawyer, Deputy Director

Date: April 29, 2025

Re: Testimony Neither for nor Against L.D. 757 and L.D. 1696

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Bradley Sawyer, and I am testifying today on behalf of the Maine Rural Water Association. MRWA is a member-driven nonprofit organization based in Richmond, dedicated to providing training, technical assistance, and advocacy on behalf of our approximately three hundred members. The majority of our membership consists of water and wastewater utilities from across the state, all of whom are deeply committed to ensuring clean, safe drinking water and protecting the environment through the proper treatment of wastewater.

Maine is one of the most water-rich states in the country. With more than 6,000 lakes and ponds, 5,000 miles of coastline, and over 30,000 miles of rivers and streams, we are fortunate to have an abundance of surface and groundwater. The U.S. Geological Survey estimates that Maine has approximately 100 trillion gallons of groundwater stored beneath our feet. These assets give Maine a unique opportunity to lead on water resource management—not from a place of scarcity, but from a place of stewardship. Public water utilities play a vital role in that stewardship. Every day, they monitor water quality, maintain infrastructure, respond to emergencies, and ensure that drinking water meets or exceeds all state and federal safety standards. They also plan for future needs, protect source waters, and invest in systems that are often invisible to the public but critical to health, safety, and economic development.

As this proposed commission takes shape, we urge the Legislature to ensure that the contributions and perspectives of Maine's water professionals are represented in the conversation. Their expertise will be essential as the commission addresses issues such as drought resilience, groundwater ownership, emerging contaminants, and interagency coordination. MRWA stands ready to serve as a resource to the commission and this committee.

We appreciate the Legislature's recognition that water is one of Maine's most valuable natural resources and support efforts that encourage long-term planning, protection, and wise use of this resource. The reason we are not outright supporting this legislation is that, as with all issues in this building, water becomes political. MRWA consistently urges the Legislature, and Departments of the State of Maine to make decisions based in fact and reason and not through the political lens. We historically have had concerns, and do today, when water rights are discussed in a politically charged environment. The data may not support certain desired outcomes for a future commission, and we hope that the facts are valued above any potential political agenda.

We thank you for your attention to this issue and for your commitment to protecting Maine's water for generations to come. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.