



Testimony of Mark Draper
In Support of L.D. 474; *An Act to Establish a Stewardship Program for Primary and Rechargeable Batteries*
February 25, 2026

Good Morning Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and distinguished members of the Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Mark Draper and I am the Solid Waste Director for Aroostook Waste Solutions (“AWS”). AWS is a not-for-profit corporation owned by the municipalities of Fort Fairfield, Limestone, Caribou, and Presque Isle that owns and operates the Tri-Community Landfill in Fort Fairfield, a transfer station in Presque Isle, and a drop-off recycling program serving fourteen (14) communities in central Aroostook County. The Tri Community Landfill currently provides disposal capacity for more than 70% of the County’s population.

I made the long trip to Augusta this morning to enthusiastically support the proposed bill. In recent years, we have experienced numerous fires at the landfill caused by batteries in the waste stream. In 2025 alone, we experienced eleven (11) fires; nine (9) of which were positively identified as being caused by a battery – lithium-ion batteries to be specific. Those were relatively small fires that were caught early and extinguished by AWS personnel. However, two (2) of the fires required a response from the Fort Fairfield and other local fire departments, and one of those required multiple responses over three days to fully extinguish. As you might expect, landfill fires are quite unpleasant, unhealthy, difficult to extinguish, and expensive for local communities to respond to.

That is why I am excited about the proposed bill. With batteries becoming an ever-increasing part of our society, this bill places the responsibility of creating an alternative system to collect and manage them at the end of their useful life on the producers who put them on the market. This is very much in line with previous product stewardship efforts in Maine. As with those previous efforts, the program must be free and exceptionally convenient for the general public to participate, so it is with that intent that I make the following suggestions:

- While the bill includes a specific convenience standard of at least one permanent collection location within 15 miles of 95% of Maine's population for "covered batteries that are portable batteries," no such standard is prescribed for damaged, defective, and medium-duty batteries. I respectfully suggest that the specified convenience standard should apply to all covered batteries.
- Similarly, sections of the bill include language that damaged, defective, and/or medium duty batteries can only be accepted at locations that meet "State requirements for the management of household hazardous waste." Frankly, I'm not sure what those standards even are, but I respectfully request that this language be removed and replaced with the requirement that the stewardship organization provide adequate training and collection containers for any collection location that is willing to accept these units.
- In any event, to maximize convenience and participation for the general public, we should remove as many barriers as possible that potentially dissuade or exclude drop-off options.

In closing, I would note that, as is rarely the case, this issue affects literally all aspects of the solid waste management system, including processing facilities, landfills, transporters, incinerators, transfer stations, and recycling centers. Nearly everyone I talk to has experienced an incident involving batteries. This is why I respectfully request that you consider my proposed changes to the bill and ultimately vote "ought-to-pass as amended" on L.D. 474.

Thank you for your attention and I would be happy to answer any questions.