



May 4, 2021

Chairman James Dill
Madam Chair Margaret O'Neil
Joint Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Cross Building, Room 214
Maine State House
Augusta, ME 04330

Re: NEPMA Opposes LD 1599 – A Bill that Erects Extraneous Hurdles to Protecting Public Health and Property and Publicly Shames Businesses and Residents for Having Pest Infestations

Dear Chairman Dill, Madam Chair O'Neil, and Members of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry:

The New England Pest Management Association (NEPMA), the trade group for structural pest management companies or "pest control" companies in Maine, appreciates the opportunity to share our thoughts on LD 1599, as we want to be constructive in the policymaking process. We applaud the sponsors for attempting to modernize pesticide use reporting, as NEPMA supports this too.

NEPMA supports allowing for report submissions to the Maine Board of Pesticides (BPC) to be in an electronic format. While we oppose LD 1599, as written, we support the current reporting law and modernizing it by allowing for electronic submissions.

LD 1599 Shames Maine Residents and Businesses

NEPMA is opposed to LD 1599 for many reasons but one major reason is that the bill would publicly shame Maine businesses and residents that experience pest infestations. *Title 22 MRSA 1471-CC (1)* would require the Maine Board of Pesticides Control to publish pesticide application information that includes the addresses of where pesticides were applied.

For example, if a resident had bed bugs and a professional pest control company serviced their home, the entire world would be made aware that this household had a bed bug infestation. A bed bug infestation is usually a traumatizing experience that triggers mental health issues¹ but LD 1599 would add an element of shame that we fear would likely discourage people from hiring a pest management professional and would likely result in more untrained citizens self-treating for bed bugs and illegal pest control companies filling the void in the pest control market. LD 1599 also deviates from science and dilutes the effectiveness of Maine's landmark bed bug law pursuant to

¹ Jerome Goddard and Richard De Shazo, "Psychological Effects of Bed Bug Attacks (*Cimex Lectularius* L.)," *The American Journal of Medicine* 125, no. 1 (2012): [https://www.amjmed.com/article/S0002-9343\(11\)00749-2/fulltext](https://www.amjmed.com/article/S0002-9343(11)00749-2/fulltext)

Title 14 M.R.S.A. §6021-A,² that guarantees free professional bed bug control to tenants in landlord-tenant housing.

Additionally, we are concerned that LD 1599 would disproportionately shame low-income residents, as it was recently discovered that a low-income household was 8 to 12 times more likely to have a bed bug infestation than a high-income household.³ Not only could this provision cause societal shame but it could also result in negative economic impacts for Maine residents wishing to sell properties that have been known to have bed bugs or wanting to rent another property, as a bed bug infestation at a previous residence could result in a denial of lease approval.

Maine residents would not be alone, as LD 1599 would shame businesses as well. *Title 22 MRSA 1471-CC (1)* would also negatively harm the Maine restaurant and hospitality industry. For example, bed bug infestations can occur at hotels and cockroach and rodent infestations can occur at restaurants. Again, we are concerned that publicly shaming businesses would create unintended consequences that could result in potentially dangerous self-treatments or illegal pest control companies filling the void in the pest control market. LD 1599 could cause substantial harm to the Maine hospitality industry by publishing information about cockroaches and rodents in restaurant kitchens or bed bug infestations at hotels, as customers would be discouraged from eating at those restaurants or staying at those hotels.

LD 1599 = Not Practical

A structural pest management technician would already employ integrated pest management (IPM) tactics. Technicians travel to approximately six to ten or more customers in a single workday. Starting in 2024, *Title 22 MRSA 1471-CC (3)* in LD 1599 would require reports to be submitted to the Maine Board of Pesticides Control at least one day prior to a pesticide being applied. This is not feasible and could increase the cost of protecting public health and property, as pest control operators would have to drive to the customer's residence or business a day before to document where they may or may not apply a pesticide. We serve multiple customers in a day and having to double the amount of driving to businesses and homes to fill out paperwork for a reason that is not based in science is concerning to NEPMA. For example, a cockroach or rodent infestation could be contaminating massive amounts of food or stinging insects could be targeting a family, but a whole day would be needed to elapse before a pesticide could be applied to protect public health. LD 1599 is not based in science, could allow pest infestations to proliferate in that time span, and could increase the cost of pest control services. Lastly, *Title 22 MRSA 1471-CC (4)*, would require our structural pest control operators to document information regarding agricultural crops, which is confusing to our industry, as we are the structural pest control industry.

Conclusion

We respectfully oppose this legislation, as it is very impractical. However, we do support modernizing the current requirements and want to be constructive in the policymaking process. Thank you for your time.

² Title 14 M.R.S.A. §6021-A, <https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/14/title14sec6021-A.html>

³ Chris Sutherland, Andrew J. Greenlee, and Daniel Schneider, "Socioeconomic Drivers of Urban Pest Prevalence," *People and Nature*, 2020, <https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/pan3.10096>

Sincerely,
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