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Judiciary Committee
Government Oversight Committee

Testimony of Senator Lisa Keim before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Environment and Natural Resources

LD 676, "An Act To Reclassify Part of the Androscoggin River to Class B"

May 3, 2021

Good morning Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, I am Lisa Keim, and I proud to represent the citizens of Senate District 18, which includes Northern Oxford County and two communities in Androscoggin County. I am writing in opposition to LD 676, "An Act To Reclassify Part of the Androscoggin River to Class B."

The bill seeks to upgrade the river beginning in Lewiston down to Merrymeeting Bay in Brunswick. As recently as 2019, the Department opposed a previous attempt to do an upgrade stating that it had determined that "there is no feasible approach to ensure attainment of Class B dissolved oxygen criteria in the lower Androscoggin River." It is my understanding that the Department's study of the issue this year has revealed that the lower Androscoggin River still does not meet Class B standards and reclassifying it now would put all existing dischargers into non-compliance.

I am concerned that the upgrade, if approved, would stifle economic development all along the length of the river, including the communities of my district. The Department has been clear that it must and will regulate all discharges to achieve and maintain the applicable water quality classification should the lower part of the river be upgraded to Class B. The impacts of the upgrade reach far beyond the lower Androscoggin. The bill becomes a de facto upgrade for the entire river.

I urge the Committee to uphold Maine's existing regulatory processes and vote this bill Ought Not To Pass. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.