



DATE: May 3, 2021
TO: Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
FROM: Samantha Warren, UMS Director of Government & Community Relations
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RE: **LD 1532, An Act To Protect Maine's Air Quality By Strengthening Requirements For Air Emissions Licensing**

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources: I am writing today on behalf of the University of Maine System (UMS) to make you aware of our serious concerns regarding LD 1532, *An Act To Protect Maine's Air Quality By Strengthening Requirements For Air Emissions Licensing*.

We share the sponsors' commitment to protecting and improving public and environmental health. UMS universities have led the way in advancing sustainability on our campus and in Maine communities. Since 2006, we have **reduced our System's total emissions by more than one-third**, including by converting two entire campuses to be powered by sustainably harvested local wood energy (Universities of Maine at Farmington and Fort Kent). Across UMS, we are increasingly using solar, geothermal, other renewables and less carbon intensive fuels – **radically reducing our use of more carbon intensive oil by more than 75%** over the last 15 years. Additionally, we have newly pledged more than 40 million kwh of annual university electrical load to Maine's net energy program and goals. And we are an international leader in climate and related research, lending more than two dozen scientific and technical experts to the development of the Maine Climate Council's action plan.

All UMS universities have active air licenses that were granted by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, including those that regulate the emissions of the aforementioned highly innovative and efficient energy, heating and cooling technologies. As we currently understand it, **LD 1532 would result in those licenses not being renewable at our campuses in Farmington, Fort Kent, Gorham, Machias, Orono, Portland and Presque Isle** – all of which have emissions sources within 1,000 feet of private residences and/or university residence halls.

As noted in Maine DEP's testimony, this setback provision "would be impractical or impossible" especially for educational institutions. At most, if not all, UMS campuses, there is not an alternative site on our property to which we could permissibly relocate the licensed source. And even if there was, it is unimaginable how we could afford to do so. Our System has \$1.3B in deferred maintenance and imminent need, has seen our annual State appropriation increase by just 0.6% on average over the past 15 years, and faces tens of millions of dollars in unaddressed pandemic related losses. Even if the setback was removed, the costly air monitoring and complex triennial licensing process also proposed by LD 1532 would be highly burdensome for our public institutions.

Closing our campuses that are the cornerstones of rural communities like Fort Kent and Machias is not consistent with our commitment to serve the education, workforce and economic needs of those regions or the State statute that requires them to remain there. While we realize this was not the intent of this legislation, **LD 1532 is simply unworkable for Maine's public universities. We urge you to vote "ought not to pass."** Please let me know if the UMS can provide additional informational in advance of your work session.