



**Testimony of the Environmental Priorities Coalition
In Support of LD 1639
An Act To Protect the Health and Welfare of Maine Communities
and Reduce Harmful Solid Waste
Before the Committee On Environment and Natural Resources
May 17, 2021**

Good morning Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and members of the Committee On Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Abigail Bradford, I am a resident of Stillwater and live about 8 miles from the Juniper Ridge Landfill (JRL). I am also Maine Conservation Alliance's Outreach Manager. MCA is a statewide organization representing more than 8,500 members and supporters dedicated to protecting Maine's environment and our democracy.

I am here today testifying in support of LD 1639 "An Act To Protect the Health and Welfare of Maine Communities and Reduce Harmful Solid Waste" on behalf of the Environmental Priorities Coalition. The EPC is a partnership of thirty-two conservation, environmental, and public health organizations. You can find the list of organizations at the bottom of this testimony. We represent over 120,000 members in Maine and work together to protect the good health, good jobs, and way of life that our environment provides. LD 1639 is priority legislation for our coalition for 2021.

Maine has become a dumping ground for toxic waste from other states. A legal loophole in Maine's waste management laws allows out-of-state waste to be classified as "in-state-waste" once it enters a solid waste processing facility in Maine. This has allowed well over one hundred thousand tons of waste from surrounding states to be dumped in Maine each year since at least 2011.¹ This is filling up Maine's state-owned landfills, which are intended to be reserved only for waste generated in Maine - leading to costly landfill expansions, increasing pollution and potentially the need for new landfills.

1. Summary of ReEnergy Lewiston Solid Waste Inputs & Outputs prepared by Dept. of Environmental Protection, January 2021: Assuming the Construction and Demolition Debris (CDD) sent from ReEnergy to landfills was comparable to the CDD received by ReEnergy in terms of what state it originated in, then CDD and CDD fines from states other than Maine shipped from ReEnergy to landfills varied from roughly 136,000 to 206,000 tons from 2011-2019.

Even more troubling, much of this waste is hazardous - containing neurotoxins and potent carcinogens such as arsenic, dioxins and PFAS compounds. As Massachusetts and other nearby states have strengthened their waste regulations, they have sent their banned materials, including toxic construction and demolition debris, to Maine for disposal.

In my previous job, I studied our national and international waste systems and learned about the highly toxic makeup of the liquid leachate that landfills produce. I read the evidence that even with the most advanced liners, this liquid will eventually leak out of landfills. I read case study after case study of communities who suffered public health disasters as this leachate made its way into their drinking water. During three years of research, I never came across anything as horrifying as what is happening with JRL's leachate. I was prepared to testify that I'm concerned by the landfill's proximity to tributaries that feed into the Penobscot River because of the likelihood of leaks. Then I learned that the leachate is not leaking. It is being actively discharged into the river after being insufficiently treated at the Nine Dragons Paper Mill in Old Town. This water treatment facility is designed to treat mill waste, not landfill leachate, which contains an immense suite of hazardous chemicals in high concentrations.

This is a threat to my community's drinking water. This is a threat to those of us who have swum in the river for years - unaware of what's being pumped into it. This is a threat to the Penobscot River that is one with the Penobscot people - sacred and essential to their history, culture and ways of living. This contributes to pollution that makes it sometimes unsafe to eat foods from the shore such as fiddleheads, to eat fish often from its waters, and to drink the water ever. All practices that have sustained the Penobscot people for millennia. This is an issue of environmental injustice.

It is not okay for the health of those of us who live near Juniper Ridge to be impacted in exchange for profit; this is short-sighted and financially irresponsible. The costs incurred from pollution from the site will be large and shouldered by Maine taxpayers for generations to come. Those are not the kind of profits Maine should be seeking. Becoming the dumping ground for other states' banned hazardous waste is counter to protecting Maine's natural environment - the lifeblood of our economy, what holds young Mainers like myself here and draws others back.

People living near JRL are not only disproportionately impacted by the waste facility, but have also been systematically excluded from the decision making process for landfill expansion permits and bills aimed at addressing their concerns. This trend spurred the creation of Don't Waste ME, a coalition of impacted community members and tribal members who are driving this bill.

LD 1639 will clarify the definition of in-state waste as only waste that is originally discarded in Maine. This bill will also give communities most impacted by landfills a greater say in the licensing and expansion of state-owned landfills by ensuring equal protection and environmental

justice. This will help stop Maine from being the dumping ground for other states' banned hazardous waste.

For these reasons, Maine's Environmental Priorities Coalition chose LD 1639 as priority legislation for 2021. On behalf of all thirty-two EPC partner organizations and our many thousands of members and supporters, I urge you to vote ought to pass. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to you and I am happy to answer any questions.

Acadia Center
Appalachian Mountain Club
Atlantic Salmon Federation
Community Action Works
Conservation Law Foundation
Defend Our Health
Environment Maine
Friends of Casco Bay
Gateway Community Services
Greater Portland Immigrant Welcome Center
Islesboro Islands Trust
Maine Association of Conservation Commissions
Maine Audubon
Maine Conservation Alliance
Maine Council of Churches
Maine Council of Trout Unlimited
Maine Lakes Society
Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association
Maine People's Alliance
Maine Public Health Association
Maine Rivers
Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network
Natural Resources Council of Maine
Physicians for Social Responsibility - Maine Chapter
RESTORE: The North Woods
The Trust for Public Land
Union of Concerned Scientists
Sierra Club Maine
Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative
The Ocean Conservancy
The Wilderness Society
350 Maine