

May 10, 2021

Dear Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, members of the committee:

I am writing for MUUSAN in support of LD 1639: "An Act to Protect the Health and Welfare of Maine Communities and Reduce Harmful Solid Waste." As you know, a legal loophole allows the dumping of toxic out-of-state waste in the state-owned Juniper Ridge Landfill in Old Town. The ongoing consequences of this dumping contradict the principles of my Unitarian Universalist faith. One might argue that the details of this dumping would contradict the values of many Mainers if they were made transparent.

A landfill in any community presents environmental hazards and risks for the people living nearby. In the case of the Juniper Ridge landfill, the Penobscot Nation, and others living in its shadow, are shouldering these harmful impacts. This is environmental injustice at work. Sites of historical, cultural, and spiritual significance are threatened. *Unitarian Universalists acknowledge and value the inherent worth and dignity of every person.* I stand with my indigenous neighbors; they deserve to be included in the decision making for any landfill expansion. They deserve clean water and land.

LD 1639 would limit the amount of tonnage that a facility can send to Juniper Ridge. Out-of-state waste would be identified as such- not disguised as Maine generated. Right now, waste from out-of-state is classified "from Maine" simply because it passes through a solid waste facility before being landfilled. This bill would also distinguish that landfilling is not recycling and none of the waste in a landfill would count toward the 50% recycling standard that a solid waste facility must meet.

Thousands of tons of out-of-state waste have been landfilled in Maine. LD 1639 would ensure protection of our environment by shifting internal waste plant labor towards recycling ME-produced waste. *Unitarian Universalists respect the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.* We are the stewards of our environment- the dumping of toxic materials threatens the indigenous community, the river, and the land.

The state of Maine used taxpayer money to buy the Juniper Ridge landfill with the intent of **preventing** out-of-state waste from going into it. Now, look at these facts:

* The amount of waste has increased by 32 percent since 2012

* The 2017 disposal amounts were 40 percent higher than the maximum amounts anticipated in 2004 when Maine first acquired the landfill

*30% of the waste landfilled at JRL each year is toxic construction and demolition debris from out-of-state which is the equivalent of 16 forty ton big rigs dumping waste into JRL EVERY single day.

None of this can be reconciled with the original intent of the purchase of Juniper Ridge.

Put people and health over profit. Put the long-term-health of our environment and the Penobscot River above the importation of toxic waste that our neighboring states won't even allow in their own backyards. As John Banks, the natural resources director of the Penobscot Nation, said: "Unfortunately, Maine has allowed hundreds of thousands of tons of out-of-state waste to be landfilled in our state simply by changing the legal definition. The result is that we've become the dumping ground for states to our south. It is time to correct this massive injustice."

Close the loophole to reduce landfilling and protect Maine's people, communities, water, and land. Support LD 1639.

Melissa Dearborn

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