



Portland Water District
FROM SEBAGO LAKE TO CASCO BAY

**TESTIMONY OF THE PORTLAND WATER DISTRICT NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST
LD 1639 An Act to Protect the Health and Welfare of Maine Communities and Reduce Harmful
Solid Waste**

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, I am Scott Firmin, and I am the Director of Wastewater Services for the Portland Water District. I provide this testimony neither for nor against LD 1639.

The Portland Water District (PWD, the District) is a quasi-municipal utility authorized by state charter to provide water service to over 200,000 people in eleven greater Portland communities, and wastewater treatment and interception services to six of those communities.

In serving the needs of our six wastewater communities by safely accepting, conveying, and treating the wastewater generated by residential, commercial and industrial uses, biosolids are generated that must be managed. These materials are generated by all wastewater treatment plants in Maine. Historically, they have been beneficially reused through agronomic land application or composting. In the case of PWD, we generate the largest volume of biosolids in Maine and have relied on composting, commercial digesting, and for the most part landfilling.

This bill will limit the amount of recycling process residual and bulky waste that can be accepted by Maine landfills and could limit the amount of out-of-state waste accepted. The reason for this testimony is to highlight the need for care in these deliberations and decisions. Concerns related to PFAS have left landfilling as the final outlet for the disposal of biosolids in Maine. This material is generated each and every day as we work to ensure water quality is protected; biosolids have to be actively managed. In the case of PWD, that's 3 or 4 full truck loads daily. There is no storage capacity beyond several days and currently no option other than landfilling.

As more and more biosolids have been driven to landfill disposal, this has created significant logistical challenges for landfills. The most significant need is the need to mix biosolids with other landfill waste (at the ratio of 5 times landfill waste for each load of biosolids!). Without waste to mix with biosolids at landfills, biosolids will be unable to be accepted, and the final affordable option to manage the biosolids generated will no longer be viable.

This is not conjecture. Last spring, as construction slowed in Massachusetts and other states, the volume of bulky waste delivered to Maine landfills plummeted. This created immediate concern that the volume of available waste would no longer support the ability to accept biosolids at landfills because of the need to mix the waste with biosolids. Because of the drop in the volume of solid waste delivered to landfills last year, management of biosolids disposal became much more difficult, requiring analysis of landfill operations and weekly discussions regarding the ability to accept our biosolids at the landfill. Fortunately, construction activity resumed and related wastes increased, helping to alleviate the concern and allow our disposal process to continue.

The solid waste management network is highly interrelated. Changes in policy related to the volume of waste and out-of-state waste accepted at landfills can have systematic effects that can ripple through the entire solid waste management system and create unintended consequences. Restricting out-of-state wastes, while biosolids have only landfilling as the final management option, will have sudden and chilling impacts.

For these reasons, the District urges you to carefully consider the issue at hand in concert with other solid waste challenges in Maine, including biosolids management in the face of current PFAS concerns. Any changes in policy that impact available volumes of material to allow for biosolids to be accepted at landfills should be considered in a timeframe that will allow for infrastructure to successfully manage biosolids to be implemented. This will take years as we learn more about managing PFAS in biosolids.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Firmin", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Scott Firmin
Director of Wastewater Services