

**Testimony of Jeffrey Pidot
In Opposition to
LD 1979, “An Act To Sustain Good-paying Jobs in the Forest Products
Industry by Ensuring Consistency between Comprehensive River Resource
Management Plans and State Water Quality Standards”**

before the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
February 28, 2022

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jeffrey Pidot. Until my retirement, I served for 31 years in the Maine Attorney General’s Office. For 17 years, I was Chief of the Office’s Natural Resources Division. During my service there, I often appeared before this Committee, but in retirement very rarely do so, and now always as a citizen representing no other interests. However, the implications of this bill, while they may be challenging to fully fathom, would have grave impacts on Maine’s interests. That’s why I decided to offer this testimony to you today.

During this hearing, I expect you will receive detailed analyses from experts concerning how the bill would undermine Maine’s interests, so I will keep my comments here brief and non-technical.

LD 1979 would do violence to the delicate balance achieved by prior legislatures and administrations of both parties over a period of decades in weighing, on behalf of Maine’s public, the economic and environmental benefits and costs of hydro and other river development and restoration projects. Maine’s laws and the programs they authorize have resulted in enormous and demonstrable improvements to the State’s water quality and fisheries, while still enabling appropriate utilization and restoration of our river resources. Under the leadership of many legislatures and administrations, Maine has become a nationally recognized leader in this area.

By contrast, LD 1979, while it might financially benefit a handful of multinational corporations, would throw into turmoil Maine’s established river conservation, development and restoration programs. The bill would require Maine agencies to undertake costly studies of unknown dimension (which should require a hefty fiscal note). The bill’s intended outcome would be to silence Maine’s voice concerning the future of our rivers in favor of decision-making by a remote federal bureaucracy attended by those who can pay the high price of admission in the halls

and back rooms of Washington. This would be a tragic step backwards, defeating rather than promoting the interests of Maine and its citizens.

After carefully considering the problems that would be spawned by LD 1979, I hope you will vote this bill “ought not to pass.”

Thank you for considering these views and for the work you do for Maine.