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Greetings Senator Lawrence, Representative Ziegler and EUT Committee Members,

My name is Lissa Widoff, I live in Freedom, ME and I am writing in *support* of LD 1111 “An Act Concerning Contracts and Agreement for Large-Scale Water Extraction”. I am an ecologist, planner and environmental professional who has worked in a variety of capacities in Maine natural resource matters since 1980.

This bill is simply long overdue. We all agree that Maine is blessed with abundant water that serves many community, individual and economic needs. However, as we see across the country and across the globe, the privatization of water, especially of groundwater, is a trend that Maine can do much more to protect itself from. As demands on water resources grow from industry and development, and new harms upon our water resources come to light, like PFAS contamination, anything we can do to strengthen the public interest in water protection and set limits for water extraction and related uses is welcomed.

LD 1111 is a very modest step in the direction of more oversight over how private water resources are contracted to private parties for extraction, as it once was before a similar law was overturned in 2006. As you all know, Maine law places ownership of water in the hands of whomever holds the land title. This does little to acknowledge both cumulative impacts upon and uses of the shared waters beneath the surface of the land. Most states recognize water rights as a separate ownership right in the “bundle” of rights that accompany land ownership, which allows more realistic negotiations about how the limited water resources of a river, aquifer or other body, can meet community needs now and in the future. LD 1111 would allow for a more holistic and watershed approach to water resource management.

Placing a 3 year limit on contracts allows for a much needed control and oversight of how promised practices are proceeding and be able to make adjustments in a timely way. Loopholes exist in how water extraction projects are evaluated (as noted in [Taylor v. PUC - PUC 15-89 - 5.12.16](#)) whereby MPUC does not have the authority to consider impacts beyond the immediate impacts on the facility when approving long-term contractual agreements for bulk water extraction export. Allowing this perspective to continue instead of taking steps to better steward our water resources simply makes no sense.

Without reviewing the years and years of prior efforts to recognize the vulnerability and the great value of Maine’s water resources, as I am sure others will do, I urge you to support LD1111 as a first step in ensuring that the ecological, natural resource and community values of water will be better protected and regulated, before we all find ourselves high and dry from essentially a giveaway of our water resources for private gain.

Thank you for your consideration,

Lissa Widoff