

Date: April 11, 2023

To: Energy, Utilities & Technology Committee

From: Cole Cochrane, Maine Youth Action

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 1111, An Act Concerning Contracts and Agreement for Large-scale Water Extraction



Senator Lawrence, Rep Ziegler, and the honorable members of the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee,

My name is Cole Cochrane, I am a senior at Thornton Academy in Saco and I am here on behalf of Maine Youth Action, a statewide youth advocacy group that represents hundreds of young Mainers from varying backgrounds. We are providing testimony in support of LD 1111, an Act Concerning Contracts and Agreement for Large-scale Water Extraction.

As you all are aware, my generation will be facing the brunt of the climate crisis. When I am an adult, effects from climate change, such as food and water shortages, environmental degradation, increased natural disasters, will be greatly exacerbated given our current direction. Therefore, I find it imperative that we take the necessary action now to better our future... my future. I am proud of the work Maine has done in many respects; for example, the Maine Won't Wait climate action plan. Plus, it is clear that one of the utmost priorities for our state is environmental and natural resource protection. As a clear priority for the public and the future health of our state, it then becomes a responsibility of our decision makers, such as yourselves, to ensure it is upheld. This is what makes LD 1111 essential.

The current process of water extraction agreement in Maine is reckless. We allow decades long contracts to be secured, which strips power away from municipalities and those in impacted communities. This results in limited recourse and/or change once an agreement is made. Furthermore, such contracts disempower our youth. After all, securing agreements such as these for 20, 30, 40 years means that young Mainers now won't have a say as adults over water extraction in their communities. This creates the current state of such agreements as not only

reckless and irresponsible, but also undemocratic. As I mentioned earlier, young Mainers and the greater part of our state emphasizes the need for climate action and prioritizes natural resource protection. These positions that we hold only have power in a democratic process, which is what ought to be in place for large-scale water extraction. I believe strongly that LD 1111 achieves that purpose with a sensible approach. By restricting the terms of the agreement to three years, as well as requiring local approval, LD 1111 democratizes the process and empowers individuals to advocate for responsible and sustainable practices. The youth of our state will be impacted the most by the decisions you make. The members of this committee will be deciding whether or not my generation has the protection in place for our natural resources. I encourage all of you to vote on behalf of young Mainers today by voting “ought to pass” on LD 1111. I thank you for your time and service.