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Testimony of the York Sewer District in Opposition to LD 1639 An Act to Protect the Health and Welfare of Maine Communities and to Reduce Harmful Solid Waste

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and honorable members of the Environmental and Natural Resources Committee, I am Timothy Haskell and I am the Superintendent of the York Sewer District. I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to LD 1639.

The York Sewer District is a quasi-municipal utility providing clean water services to York Village, York Harbor, and York Beach, encompassed within the Town of York. As part of those services we manage the disposal of biosolids created by the treatment of the waste generated by the community we serve.

During my 20-year tenure as Superintendent, the District has consistently attempted and prioritized the beneficial reuse of these biosolids through agricultural land application and primarily by composting the material. These beneficial reuse alternatives were severely curtailed in March of 2019, by concerns over PFAS, which forced much of the biosolids generated in the State to be predominantly restricted to landfilling.

As many of you may recall, on the heels of this significant impact to biosolids handling, LD 112, was introduced as part of the 129th Legislature in May of 2019. At the time LD 112 proposed to severely limit or restrict the use or receiving of crucially needed bulking agents, for the disposal of biosolids in landfills, all while biosolids were being diverted to landfills. All the potential was present for the perfect storm of drastic proportion that could have severely curtailed or eliminated accepting biosolids at landfills, while also curtailing or eliminating beneficial reuse alternatives. Fortunately, an amendment was offered by DEP (if memory serves me, but I'm nearing retirement in December) that recommended the removal of language prohibiting the use of the bulking agents.

LD 1639, like LD 112, attempts to curtail or eliminate the use of bulking agents which we know are critical to landfilling biosolids. The need/option to send biosolids to landfill due to PFAS concerns remains high, two years later in 2021, and this bill could remove landfilling as a biosolids management option. Where then would biosolids go? This is not an insignificant issue and needs to be considered.

Similarly, LD 1639, highlights the importance and need for a statewide coordinated and comprehensive solid waste handling policy. As we are all aware, the solid waste management system is highly intertwined and sometimes the smallest of changes can have significant unintended consequences, often continuing for years till the full extent of the change is realized. Changes may also necessitate modifications in infrastructure, by biosolids generators and handlers, that may take years and entail the expenditure of hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars to implement. These issues need to be thoughtfully and carefully planned and considered mindful of a schedule that allows for complicated biosolids infrastructure to be modified and management alterations implemented.

I ask you to carefully consider the potential ramifications of this bill and respectfully request that you vote LD 1639 Ought Not to Pass.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy H. Haskell", written in a cursive style.

Timothy H. Haskell
Superintendent