

Written Testimony in Support of LD 1639: An Act to Protect the Health and Welfare of Maine Communities and Reduce Harmful Solid Waste

Submitted by Mark Ward,

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Members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources-

My name is Mark Ward. I wish to express my support for LD 1639, An Act to Protect the Health and Welfare of Maine Communities and Reduce Harmful Solid Waste, which aims to reserve capacity at the state-owned Juniper Ridge landfill in Old Town by limiting annual disposal amounts coming from processing facilities to the amount of waste that those facilities take in from actual Maine sources.

For the past two years, my friend, Michael Uhl, and I have undertaken a self-education campaign on the waste stream in Lincoln County—a project that began when we discovered that our local transfer station had stopped accepting certain materials for recycling. We have shared what we have learned with the readers of the Lincoln County News, first through a series of op-eds, and beginning in 2020 through our bi-weekly “Rubbish!” column.

In spring 2019, we visited Juniper Ridge on a tour set up for the ENR committee that was open to the public. That is when we first became aware of the issue of out-of-state waste going to Juniper Ridge, which we have learned amounts to hundreds of thousands of tons of out-of-state waste annually.

We generate enough of our own garbage in Maine, and don't want to become the dumping ground for waste from away. Precisely this concern prompted the Legislature in 1989 to reform Maine's laws governing solid waste management by banning new commercial landfills and replacing them with state-owned facilities. The intent was to allow Maine to control its own solid waste future.

More than thirty years later out-of-state waste continues to stream into Maine. Much of this waste, primarily construction and demolition debris from New Hampshire and Massachusetts, manages to find its way to the state-owned landfill at Juniper Ridge. Two of the largest importers of construction and demolition debris in Maine are ReEnergy (also known as ReSource Waste Services) in Lewiston and Aggregate Recycling Corp. in Eliot. According to figures from the companies' respective 2019 annual reports, ReEnergy imported 214,441 tons and Aggregate Recycling Corp. imported 25,658 tons of construction and demolition debris from New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Both send waste to Juniper Ridge.

LD 1639 in an effective way to curb this practice by ensuring that processing facilities cannot send more waste annually to a state-owned landfill than they have taken in from Maine sources. This is a good common-sense approach to ensure that state-owned landfill capacity is not being consumed at a rate that exceeds waste generated from Maine sources.

LD 1639 also removes a very specific carve-out that was added to the well-intended LD 401 bill passed in the last legislative session. The carve-out is worded so specifically that it applies to only one solid waste processing facility in the state—the ReEnergy facility in Lewiston—and provides that facility with a less stringent set of rules than for any other facility in the state. The requirements for all processing facilities in the state should be the same and this bill levels that playing field.

Finally, LD 1639 ensures that environmental justice will be a criterion that must be considered by the DEP Commissioner in any public benefit determination made for a proposed new or expanded solid waste disposal facility.

All three items in this bill are practical, common-sense measures that will improve solid waste management law for the benefit of all Mainers, and I urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 1639.

Sincerely,

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