



Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Director of Advocacy, Defend Our Health  
In SUPPORT of LD 1639, “An Act To Protect the Health and Welfare of Maine Communities and  
Reduce Harmful Solid Waste”  
Before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
May 17, 2021

Good Morning Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the director of advocacy for Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health’s mission is to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food and drinking water, healthy homes and products that are toxic-free and climate friendly. We are pleased to support LD 1639, “An Act To Protect the Health and Welfare of Maine Communities and Reduce Harmful Solid Waste”

Maine is currently managing not only its own waste, but waste from out-of-state at the Juniper Ridge Landfill. This landfill is state-owned and should be receiving only waste from Maine. Unfortunately, a legal loophole in Maine’s waste management laws has allowed for significant landfilling of out-of-state waste in Maine’s state-owned landfills, which are intended to be reserved for waste generated in Maine. The loophole classifies waste as “in-state” once it enters a solid waste processing facility—no matter where it originated.

Of particular concern to us is the issue of PFAS leaching from the Juniper Ridge Landfill into soil and water in the surrounding areas. PFAS has been widely identified in landfill leachate.<sup>1</sup> This PFAS is going to end up in sludge or in the water discharged to our water ways. This source of contamination has been a particular concern of Maine’s tribal communities who are more likely to be heavily exposed to PFAS and other bioaccumulative toxins from subsistence fishing.

People living near the landfill have been disproportionately impacted by the waste facility. PFAS and other toxins from the landfill can impact the soil and drinking water in the surrounding communities, exposing citizens to toxic chemicals that can lead to significant health issues. Additionally, impacted communities have been systematically excluded from the decision-making process for the landfill, which leaves those most impacted without a say in what happens in their communities.

Maine needs to strengthen its weak waste policies for the state-owned Juniper Ridge Landfill to help protect the surrounding communities. Maine should not be a dumping ground for toxic

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<sup>1</sup> Johnnie R. Lang, B. McKay Allred, Jennifer A. Field, James W. Levis, and Morton A. Barlaz. “[National Estimate of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substance \(PFAS\) Release to U.S. Municipal Landfill Leachate.](#)” Environmental Science & Technology 2017 51 (4), 2197-2205 DOI: 10.1021/acs.est.6b05005



waste that threatens sites of historical, cultural, spiritual significance for the Penobscot Nation, the Penobscot River and Bay, as well as the drinking water for the area. We urge the committee to vote unanimously “ought to pass” on LD 1639.

Thank you for your time.