

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, State Advocacy Director
Environmental Health Strategy Center
before the
Maine Board of Environmental Protection
**Regarding the Citizen Petition to Amend Chapter 400 of the Maine Solid Waste
Management Rules**

September 17, 2020

Good morning, Chairman Draper and Members of the Board of Environmental Protection,

My name is Sarah Woodbury. I live in South Portland and serve as Director of Advocacy for the Environmental Health Strategy Center. The Strategy Center is a Maine-based non-profit that works to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food, safe drinking water, and toxic-free, climate friendly products.

The proposed citizen petition before the board will help keep Maine from becoming a dumping ground for toxic waste from other states. A loophole in the current regulation is allowing waste from other states, up to 10,000 truckloads annually, to be landfilled at Juniper Ridge. The proposed citizen petition language will help close that loophole.

As other states tighten regulations on what can and cannot be landfilled, they are shifting their toxic waste to states like Maine that have weaker regulations. We must stop that from happening. Juniper Ridge is supposed be reserved for Maine waste only but a loophole in the rules set forth by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has allowed other states to circumvent that requirement. 40% of the waste going to Juniper Ridge every year originates outside the state. We need an accurate definition for Maine waste, clarifying that it is waste generated within the state of Maine.

Toxic chemicals, including per and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) substances, end up in landfills and can leach into the soil and water, exposing those that live near the landfill. These toxic chemicals can cause severe health issues including fertility issues, certain types of cancers and neurodevelopmental issues in children. These chemicals do not break down and can remain in our bodies and the environment for decades. They are called “forever chemicals” for this very reason. While Juniper Ridge may be taking all necessary precautions to protect the health and environment of the region around the landfill, even the EPA agrees that all landfills eventually leak and can expose surrounding neighborhoods to toxic chemicals. We need to make sure that other states are not using Maine as a dumping ground for these dangerous toxins.

All across the country, waste facilities are located near low-income communities, communities of color and indigenous communities, with little thought given to the impact having these types of facilities will have on those communities and placing an undue toxic burden on those communities and Maine is no different. Working class residents and the Penobscot Nation who live near Juniper Ridge have been consistently left out of decision-making conversations while at the same time bearing the unfair burden of both

environmental and health impacts from the landfill. Not only do we need to prevent Maine from becoming a dumping ground for other states' waste, we also need to make sure that those communities most affected by what happens at Juniper Ridge have a seat at the table. The citizen petition would add specific definitions for equal protection and environmental justice, ensuring that those most affected will have their voices heard.

We urge you protect the health and environment of those impacted by the Juniper Ridge Landfill by supporting the citizen petition to amend chapter 400 of the Maine solid waste management rules.

Thank you.