



Testimony in **SUPPORT** of:

LD 1473, An Act to Protect Certain Unfiltered Drinking Water Sources

*Submitted to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee
May 1, 2023*

Good afternoon, Chair Brenner, Chair Gramlich, and Distinguished Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today in support of LD 1473. My name is Susan Gallo, and I am the Executive Director of Maine Lakes. Our membership organization includes more than 6,000 supporters and volunteers as well as over 80 Lake Associations. We are dedicated to our mission of promoting, protecting, and enhancing lake water quality and habitat, and of preserving the ecological, economic, recreational, and aesthetic benefits of Maine's lakes for all Maine people.

Development in the shoreland zone around Maine's lakes, rivers and streams has serious consequences for lake health. In a natural, undeveloped watershed, rainwater would first be intercepted by many layers of vegetation. The rain getting to the forest floor would then be infiltrated into the ground, which would be uneven, with loose, absorptive soils. Very little rain would have the chance to erode soil and carry phosphorus into the lake. Phosphorus is the key nutrient that feeds excess algae growth and degrades water quality and wildlife habitat.

Maine Lakes' work focuses on outreach and actions that make developed land, where we have built roads, parking areas, roofs, and structures, act like undeveloped land. We try to "slow the flow" of rain over land in the shoreland zone, encouraging more vegetation along the shoreline and "best management practices" such as infiltration trenches and rain gardens that serve to soak up rainwater and keep it out of the lake. But even the best managed developed land does not have the same protective value as undeveloped land.

While we agree that Maine is in a housing crisis, and that we need to come up with innovative solutions to expand access to and increase the sheer volume of housing, we believe we must do so in a way that maintains the quality of Maine's waterbodies, especially those that are drinking water sources currently not required to have filtration systems.

Even with our strong shoreland zoning standards in place, adding accessory or other dwelling units onto existing structures in the shoreland zone will have consequences for lake health. Any time we develop property, even when we do it as carefully as possible, we inevitably lose vegetation, compact soils, and add impervious surfaces to the landscape. We increase the amount of rainwater that will be channeled, increasing the speed of flow and eroding soils, ultimately bringing more unwanted phosphorus into the lake.

We are concerned that adding to existing houses on lots in the shoreland zone pushes past the protective measures that existing shoreland protections provide, and that they will pose lake health risks to all Maine lakes. Ultimately, we would like to see an analysis of the adequacy of our existing shoreland zoning rules in light of this expanded development.

But for now, we enthusiastically support LD 1473 as a way to protect lakes that are drinking water suppliers and that currently have water treatment waivers.

Thank you for voting to support this important water protection bill.