February 4, 2014

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Ernest Moniz  
Secretary of Energy  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20585

The Honorable Gina McCarthy  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
William Jefferson Clinton Federal Building  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Secretary Vilsack, Secretary Moniz, and Administrator McCarthy:

We are writing to call your attention to the accomplishments of the cities of Lewiston and Auburn, Maine, which have installed a number of waste water treatment technologies at the Lewiston-Auburn Waste Water Treatment Facility. We also write to highlight the difficulties that small cities such as Lewiston face in finding federal assistance for waste water infrastructure improvement projects that provide return to ratepayers and energy generation.

In November 2011, the cities of Lewiston and Auburn jointly installed Maine’s first publicly-owned anaerobic digester at the Lewiston-Auburn Waste Water Treatment Facility. The cities also were the first in Maine to install combined heat and power (CHP) capabilities at their publicly-owned sewage treatment plant. These capabilities allowed the cities to simultaneously modernize their facilities and collect methane byproduct in a manner that allows for its control and use as a source of renewable energy. According to the plant superintendent, the plant was built with no increase in cost to ratepayers, and is expected to save ratepayers $600,000 per year.

Given the significant public benefits of this project for waste water treatment and energy generation, Lewiston and Auburn have expressed concern with the dearth of federal programs available to help small cities of this size in bringing such technologies online. In the future, we ask that you consider, subject to all applicable laws and regulations, how your agencies may be better able to assist with similar projects in cities of this size.
Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

Angus S. King
United States Senator