

Bill Lippincott
Don'tWasteME
LD2104

Senator Carson, Representative Tucker, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Bill Lippincott; I'm a resident of Hampden. I'm writing to testify in support of LD 2104: An Act To Support and Increase the Recycling of Packaging. I am Chair of a local grassroots organization, Don't Waste ME, a coalition of people across Maine advocating for responsible policies that protect the health of communities most at risk from negative impacts of landfill, incinerator, leachate and sludge disposal operations.

LD 2104 is urgently needed to help Maine communities struggling with rising costs of an ever-growing flood of wasteful packaging materials. There is increasing confusion about what can be recycled, and dozens of Maine towns have already been forced to cut back or cancel their recycling programs. Furthermore, Maine's landfills are filling up fast. We need to divert as much tonnage as possible away from Maine's landfills in order to preserve capacity. Improving recycling programs statewide will help us achieve that goal.

The recent shake-up in global recycling markets has exposed the fundamental flaws in how we manage recycling in Maine. Market downturns for some commodities, like paper and plastic, have led to an unprecedented rise in the cost of recycling. And new materials are being sold into the market with no local recycling option.

When comparing high recycling costs to the low cost of disposal, many communities are left feeling like they have no choice but to abandon or cut back on their recycling programs—which is why the recycling rate is falling. That's why we need a solution like LD 2104. Recycling programs should not be paid for by taxpayers and municipalities who have no say in what materials they are stuck managing and paying for. Most of what is in our recycling bins is packaging. Packaging, which includes plastic, steel, aluminum, glass, and cardboard, constitutes approximately 30% to 40% of the materials managed by weight in waste management programs in Maine. The companies that manufacture that packaging should be partly responsible for where it ends up. Maine already has product stewardship programs for paint, mercury containing lightbulbs and thermostats, e-waste, and rechargeable batteries. We need a similar solution for product packaging. I urge you to pass LD 2104 to help Maine towns keep their recycling programs.

Sincerely, Bill Lippincott Hampden