

Senator Carson, Representative Tucker and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.

My name is Greg Dugal and I am here today representing Hospitality Maine, which was formerly the Maine Restaurant Association and Maine Innkeepers Association, speaking in opposition to LD 1433, which is An Act To Protect the Environment and Public Health by Further Reducing Toxic Chemicals in Packaging. Our concern for this bill is the plethora of similar bills and the lack of a comprehensive approach to assessing food packaging materials to the point where there may not be any decent alternatives left to safely handle food prepared to be taken away. Takeout food needs to be able to be carried off premises in a safe manner, both for food safety concerns and quality and for safe handling for the customer.

Already we have faced a bill that would have eliminated most food packaging materials or assess deposits on them, that thankfully was killed by this committee, a ban on polystyrene, plastic bags seem to be next on the list, but I have not heard of any proactive attempt to direct the Department of Environmental Protection to work with affected industries to come up with designated alternative packaging materials or to slow down the rush to banning everything and conduct a couple of comprehensive studies to potentially prioritize the process, instead of banning all of these materials in one year. I will leave the details of these packaging materials to the chemists and scientists in the room, but it is worth noting that food packaging is reviewed for safety by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and its stringent safety review is done before new materials are allowed on the market, so that may be path that could be followed.

We urge the Committee to slow this process down and to vote ought not to pass on LD 1433 and to work with the affected industries and give us the opportunity to learn more about appropriate ways to handle food packaging moving forward.