



MOFGA Testimony In Support Of

LD 295 - An Act to Ensure Accurate Recyclability Labeling of Plastic Containers and Plastic Packaging Material

January 24, 2024

Dear Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

On behalf of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) I am submitting comments in support of LD 295 - *An Act to Ensure Accurate Recyclability Labeling of Plastic Containers and Plastic Packaging Material*. A broad-based community, MOFGA is creating a food system that is healthy and fair for all of us. Through education, training and advocacy, we are helping farmers thrive, making more local, organic food available and building sustainable communities. MOFGA certifies 526 organic farms and processing operations representing more than \$120 million in sales and we are working hard to create opportunities for Maine's next generation of farmers. Each of these farmers is a Maine businessperson for whom economic health and environmental health are interdependent.

MOFGA has long been at the forefront of advocating for a safer, cleaner, and more local food system in Maine. We believe that this bill would move Maine away from a reliance on poorly labeled plastics that end up in landfills, polluting our land and waters. Our farmers often work to find packaging options that are recyclable and align with their business's mission of clean food. Requiring a clear definition of what is recyclable in Maine would help them as well as their customers to make educated choices about how to package their food.

Plastics and the processes that create them have many impacts on public health, from increasing certain cancers, reproductive toxicity, and endocrine disruption. The public deserves access to food free of these health implications. Organic farmers want to know that when they are using products for their packaging that they are not adding to the problem of waste, and in fact, that they are providing a healthier alternative. Knowing what products and packaging are easily recyclable, helps them in this work.

We know that 46% of plastic ends up in landfills and 85% of our marine waste is unrecycled plastic, impacting the health of our fishing industry and taking up our precious landfill capacity. Giving small agricultural businesses and the public the knowledge they need to make smart purchasing choices, makes sense for our waters and our state resources. We have the right to know what happens with our trash after we are done with it, especially if we follow the misleading current labels that lead us to think we are making the smarter choice. At the heart of this bill is the intent to give purchasers the information they want about the products they are purchasing. It allows educated choice, and consumers want that choice.

When people know what they are purchasing, they will make smarter choices for our state and its waters. We will save money through reduced use of landfills, and fewer costs to control unrecycled waste. Our organic



certified farmers will be able to make smarter choices about how they package their product and educate their customers about why they have made the choices they have. This bill is a great step forward for all who want to empower consumers, small business owners, and all those who want a cleaner food system.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this important legislation.

Respectfully,

Heather Spalding
Deputy Director and Senior Policy Director

The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) started in 1971 and is the oldest and largest state organic organization in the country. We're a broad-based community that educates about and advocates for organic agriculture, illuminating its interdependence with a healthy environment, local food production, and thriving communities. We have 15,000 members, we certify more than 500 organic farms and processing facilities representing \$120 million in sales, and we are working hard to provide training and create opportunities for Maine's next generation of farmers. Each of these farmers is a Maine businessperson for whom economic health and environmental health are interdependent. While MOFGA envisions a future of healthy ecosystems, communities, people and economies sustained by the practices of organic agriculture, we attribute our success to collaboration and outreach to growers across the management spectrum.