



MOFGA Testimony In Support Of
LD 1645 - *An Act to Reduce Plastic Packaging Waste*
May 15, 2023

Good afternoon Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources My name is Heather Spalding and I am deputy director of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) MOFGA is working to build a food system that is healthy and fair for all of us I am speaking today in support of LD 1645 - *An Act to Reduce Plastic Packaging Waste*

In our 52-year history, MOFGA has promoted food production without the use of synthetic agrichemicals and fertilizers, sewage sludge, irradiation, and genetically modified organisms Increasingly, emerging science tells us that still more chemicals are contaminating our food supply, finding their way into our bodies through packaging, processing and cooking These are significant sources of exposure The past few years have made it abundantly clear that PFAS is prevalent in our food system Before we became aware of PFAS, we were particularly concerned about common food system toxins like bisphenol A and phthalates, a class of hormone-disrupting chemicals that have been linked to severe genital birth defects in baby boys and other reproductive health problems MOFGA is dedicated to preserving the integrity of the fresh, local, organic foods that our farmers and processors work so hard to produce From the soil to the dinner table, food should be free of toxic chemicals, especially for pregnant women, babies and young people through adolescence We see LD 1645 as an important step to help reduce toxins in the food system and avoid reliance on fossil fuels that threaten are destabilizing our climate

This bill lays out a plan to prioritize elimination of certain plastic materials deemed to adversely affect human health and/or the environment, to be unnecessary, or to be a hinderance to recycling or composting systems We believe that this bill will help Maine avert more PFAS crises because it will eliminate unnecessary toxins from commonly used plastics, it will eliminate materials that obstruct the efficient and smooth recovery and reprocessing of plastic waste, and allow more waste to be recovered safely and reprocessed into useful items

The bill is informed by the work of the U S Plastics Pact, a group of more than 100 businesses, not-for-profit organizations, academic and research institutions, and government agencies seeking to eliminate 11 problematic and unnecessary resins, components, and formats by 2025 in order to accelerate progress toward a circular economy for plastic packaging in the United States The Pact includes industry giants such as General Mills, Nestle, Wal-Mart, Coke, Unilever and Target, which can transform the packaging industry to be cleaner and healthier for humans and the environment Many of the companies have made significant progress toward the Pact's goals

Recycling of natural resources and proper management of the waste stream is something that MOFGA takes very seriously Each year, we host the Common Ground Country Fair at our Common Ground Education Center in Unity Our home becomes one of the largest cities in Maine for three days each September, and we work hard to minimize waste and ensure that the waste stream is clean and recyclable We collect the garbage before, during and after the Fair, sort it into recyclables, returnables, and compostables, and by Fair's end have



begun MOFGA's compost for the following year. It's hard work but it's necessary and we are showing how three days' worth of waste from 60,000 people can be managed as a resource rather than an enormous mountain of garbage. We require compostable dinner ware, we don't allow bottled water sales, we compost food waste and manure and bedding from the livestock barns, we recycle paper, metal and glass. We can't control everything that fairgoers bring in so we do have a portion of waste, much of that being plastic, that we can't recycle. We work to educate the fairgoing public about our goals. While MOFGA is striving for a zero-waste system that avoids single-use plastic items and truly recycles clean materials, we recognize that plastics are deeply entrenched in our society and that taking hazardous substances out of plastics is a critical action step.

LD 1645 would not put Maine out on a limb. Instead, Maine would join other states, countries and multinational trade blocks that recognize the urgent need to address the global plastics crisis. Dozens of states are phasing out unnecessary, unrecyclable and problematic packaging. California and New York are taking an approach based on the U.S. Plastic Pact's plan. Taiwan, New Zealand, and South Korea have phased out PVC in food packaging. South Korea has banned non-detectable plastic pigments that interfere with recycling. The European Union strictly regulates recycled plastic in food contact material, and bans a lot of single-use plastic packaging. And just last year, Canada banned the manufacture and import for sale of most single-use plastic packaging.

We appreciate that this bill authorizes the Department of Environmental Protection to adopt major substantive rules to designate additional types of prohibited plastic packaging, just as it has authority to take action on categories of products with intentionally added PFAS in advance of the 2030 sunset.

LD 1645 will be a big help in addressing several serious challenges facing Maine people and our natural environment. It will help solve the problem of chemical trespass in our bodies by eliminating unnecessary and toxic chemicals from food packaging. It will replace unnecessary disposable plastic products by replacing them with reusable products. It will reduce the complications that recycling facilities grapple with when toxic and non-recyclable plastic packaging gets mixed into the waste stream. And it will reduce the amount of waste going directly to landfills or waste incinerators by making more of the plastic waste material safely recoverable for processing into other useful products. All of this will help reduce the carbon footprint of our throwaway society by reducing, reusing, and reprocessing, rather than creating new plastics from non-renewable fossil fuels.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer questions if you have any.

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 \$90 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.