



Maine Municipal Association

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Neither For Nor Against

LD 1009 – *An Act Regarding the Reduction and Recycling of Food Waste*

March 15, 2023

Sen. Brenner, Rep. Gramlich and distinguished members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham and I submitting placeholder testimony neither for nor against, LD 1009, *An Act Regarding the Reduction and Recycling of Food Waste*, on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association, which represents the interests of municipal government before the Legislature. The positions of the Association are established by our 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC), met remotely yesterday but will require a review of the bill by the larger group next week to confirm a position.

While officials believe the composting of food scraps is a laudable goal, they also recognize that the task requires additional management that is not always possible to be provided uniformly. The best tools to address this in many communities is to promote single household composting where possible and well managed, and to allow the growing number of food scrap collection efforts have developed commercially. These activities remove a significant amount of food waste from the municipally managed stream.

Municipal officials are most concerned about the provision in the bill that requires a municipal solid waste management plan for food scraps that require application for all residents, and additionally prohibits residents from opting out of municipally provided solid waste management. In more densely populated areas, multi-unit dwellings are not included in municipal solid waste services and must procure those services privately. The density and trash needs of those buildings is required at a great rate than municipal services can feasibly meet and the volume frequently requires dedicated truck transport of the waste. The prohibition of those high-density units from opting out of municipal solid waste management services would be a significant burden on municipalities.

Additionally, the public collection of food scraps presents significant challenges for public waste containers. Co-locating both trash and food scraps in the same area in separate largely unmonitored containers will cause significant extra operational tasks for the inevitable “tragedy of the commons” that already occurs in these locations.

Rather than mandating public locations to have both containers located in the same space, a better option would be to allow the municipalities to deem where such facilities make sense in public spaces and where they can be best maintained and monitored.

If the committee has not voted on this bill prior to the full LPC has an opportunity to review potential additional consequences, I will submit testimony at that time. We hope that you will consider these initial concerns in the interim.