



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Committee on Environment & Natural Resources
From: Ania Wright, Legislative and Political Specialist, Sierra Club Maine
Date: 5/15/2023
Re: **Testimony in Support of LD 1645: *An Act to Reduce Plastic Packaging Waste***

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and members of the Environment & Natural Resources Committee, I am testifying on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy. To that end, we urge you to vote 'ought to pass' on L.D. 1645.

We are in a climate crisis. According to the most recent IPCC report, human caused warming of 1.1 degrees Celsius worldwide is already causing devastating effects that are unprecedented in recent human history from rising sea levels to extreme heat¹. I am concerned for my future every day.

Amidst this crisis, plastics - which are made from fossil fuels² and contribute to emissions at every stage of their lifecycle³ - proliferate our daily existence, environment, and ecosystems. Tiny microplastic particles are found in the air we breathe and the water we drink, exposing us to a multitude of toxic substances. And the production of these products is polluting our communities, often Black, Brown, and low-income. Based on projections from the World Energy Council, if plastics production and incineration increase as expected, greenhouse gas emissions will increase to 49 million metric tons by 2030 and 91 million metric tons by 2050⁴. We must act to regulate plastics at all levels—from production, to transportation, to use, to disposal. The era of single-use plastics in our everyday lives is one that needs to be relegated to the past—and quickly⁵.

L.D. 1645 helps us get there. The bill phases out problematic or unnecessary plastics in packaging, including:

- Polystyrene foam peanuts, noodles, and blocks used to pack some items in boxes
- PVC (vinyl) plastic used to pack some clothing items, to seal some glass jars and bottles and as plastic sleeves around some beverage bottles

¹ <https://www.wri.org/insights/2023-ipcc-ar6-synthesis-report-climate-change-findings>

² <https://www.clf.org/blog/plastic-comes-from-fossil-fuels/>

³ <https://climate.mit.edu/ask-mit/would-stopping-plastic-pollution-help-climate-change-how-do-we-do-it#> “The most commonly used plastics have been shown to release the greenhouse gasses ethylene and methane as they decompose, the latter of which traps atmospheric heat at 25 times the rate of carbon dioxide over the course of a century”

⁴ <https://www.ciel.org/reports/plastic-health-the-hidden-costs-of-a-plastic-planet-may-2019/>

⁵ <https://www.sierraclub.org/plastic>

- Toxic additives that migrate out of PET plastic bottles, polluting the environment, harming recycling, and exposing consumers to cancer-causing antimony and cobalt

In addition, the bill authorizes the Maine Department of Environmental Protection to phase out other problematic or unnecessary plastics in packaging in the future, at their discretion. Finally, this bill continues Maine's leadership in banning other problem plastics.

Given the scientifically proven urgency of the climate crisis, we urge the committee to vote 'ought to pass' on L.D. 1645. Please keep my generation and all future generations of Maine in mind as you continue to work this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ania Wright
Legislative & Political Specialist
Sierra Club Maine