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Testimony of Kevin Roche, CEO/General Manager of **ecomaine**

Environment & Natural Resources Committee in Opposition of Both

**LD 56 An Act to Remove the 5 Cent Fee for Bags in Retail Stores**

**LD 69 An Act to Repeal the Law Restricting the Use of Certain  
Plastic, Paper and Single-use Bags**

**March 26, 2025**

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**ecomaine** is a non-profit publicly owned and publicly operated solid waste organization serving 74 municipalities - 20 owner communities and 54 associate and contract member communities – accommodating the waste management needs for a population of nearly 500,000 people.

**ecomaine**'s operations and programs include: Waste-to-Energy (WTE) renewable power plant, single-sort Recycling Center, a food waste recovery program, and a 289-acre ashfill/landfill. Perhaps the most unique and notable aspect of **ecomaine** is the commitment as a leader in raising public awareness of sustainable waste management strategies. This very commitment is included in **ecomaine**'s Mission Statement established by **ecomaine**'s Board of Directors:

*“ecomaine provides comprehensive long-term solid waste solutions in a safe, environmentally responsible, economically sound manner; and is a leader in raising public awareness of sustainable waste management strategies”*

The State's goal to encourage the reduction of waste by way of fees on bags at the point of sale, have stimulated the reduction of plastic bag litter. Plastic bags are a nuisance to automated processing facilities including **ecomaine**'s due to their tendency to tangle around the spinning sorting equipment and the need to shut-down operations to clear the “tangles” from the equipment. In addition, some plastic bags become contamination in non-plastic baled recyclables. Furthermore, plastic shopping bags can end up as litter more than other types of waste and are often seen caught in the trees around landfills. Since the adoption of the plastic bag fee in Maine, **ecomaine**'s recycling operation has received fewer bags and reduced “tangler” shutdowns. Removing the bag fee and restriction on the use of plastic bags in general will cause a reversion to the “old days” when plastic bags were widespread and a facility maintenance issue as well as a source of community litter.

To emphasize **ecomaine**'s commitment to increasing Recycling capacity, **ecomaine** is forward thinking to the next generation of recycling facilities beyond its first-in-the-State single-sort recycling center to a new proposed State-of-the-art recycling facility scheduled to be open in the Autumn of 2026. And through education and outreach programs have sought to increase residential recycling rates in support of the State of Maine's recycling goals.

As noted above, **ecomaine** is opposed to LD56 due to the likely surge of plastic contamination into the recyclable material delivered to the Recycling Center. Moreover, paper bag alternatives are more easily captured by **ecomaine**'s sorting equipment and lend themselves to further recycling.

**ecomaine** opposes LD56 and LD69 due to the confusion that may only seek to confuse residents and consumers – who **ecomaine** believes, want to “do the right thing” by recycling, reducing waste and contributing to a clean environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.