



Testimony in Opposition of LD 56: An Act to Remove the 5 Cent Fee for Bags in Retail Stores, and LD 69: An Act to Repeal the Law Restricting the Use of Certain Plastic, Paper, and Single-use Bags
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Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Victor Horton. I am the Executive Director of the Maine Resource Recovery Association (MRRRA), representing 160 members and covering 60 transfer stations.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in opposition of both LD 56 and LD 69.

LD 69 proposes that Maine repeal the ban on plastic single-use bags, a law that has been highly effective at reducing household waste. To repeal the law restricting the use of plastic, paper, and single-use bags is contrary to what is best for the environment and economic efficiency.

Before the statewide ban was enacted in 2021, single-use plastic bags were a common issue for the recycling and waste industry. The flimsy plastic bags clogged litter fences at landfills that I visited and degraded equipment in Material Recovery Facilities, costing taxpayers money in costly repairs and routine maintenance.

We were hearing that the belts and motors were susceptible to the bags wrapping around the hardware causing burnouts and shutdowns.

Without clear pathways for recycling, thin plastic bags are designed to be thrown away, and have historically been a serious litter issue. On windy days, you would often find plastic bags drifting through parking lots and snagged on the branches of trees.

The thin plastic bags lacked durability compared to other reusable options and often resulted in more bags being used to hold the same number of items. I remember going to the market and bringing home about 20 bags, where now I can get out of the store with about 4-5 reusable bags that I take back many times before they become unusable.

The plastic bags, although generally marked with symbols recognizing that they are recyclable, were difficult to process and the end markets were not very interested in taking bags from transfer stations. This caused a lot of the bags to end up in the trash. It also takes fossil fuels to produce the plastic bags.

One of the issues was the processing of the bags by transfer stations. It not only took a lot of bags to make a bale, but the bales made usually had too many types of plastics in them.

Many of those bags were marked #2 and #4. These are two types of plastic that can not always be recycled together.

Also getting enough bales for a load was difficult for towns due to storage of the loose material.

Since the passage of Maine's plastic bag ban, the people of Maine can now enjoy a hike, drive or walk with much less litter in the environment and on the sides of the road. We have also heard from some of our members that the number of bags being caught in equipment has declined, and many have noticed less plastic film litter on their grounds. This demonstrates the effectiveness of Maine's law to address this material.

Along the same lines, LD 56 aims to remove the 5 cent fee on bags given to consumers by retailers at checkout. We believe that this small fee creates a reasonable financial incentive to reduce their use of store-provided bags and sends a message to the consumer that they could bring their own reusable bag next time, while also reducing the potential for litter. The merchant is reimbursed for the bags they supply to consumers, helping them defray the bag cost.

Repealing or removing the use of fees from this law would undermine the progress that Maine has made to encourage more sustainable consumer practices and would create additional strain to both our environment and our waste facilities. For these reasons, we urge the Committee to preserve Maine's plastic bag ban and vote "Ought Not to Pass" on both LD 56 and LD 69.

Respectfully submitted
Victor Horton

The Maine Resource Recovery Association (MRRA) is a nonprofit organization committed to supporting professional and sustainable materials management in Maine.

Established in 1984, MRRA serves over 160 municipalities through its work to provide ongoing education on waste regulations, evolving waste streams, and best practices. We also assist 60 transfer stations and recycling centers and help members find markets for recyclable materials, reinforcing Maine's commitment to resource recovery.