



Testimony for LD 1122, LD 56, and LD 69
Environment and Natural Resources Committee
March 25, 2025

Dear Chair Tepler, Chair Doudera and esteemed members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

My name is Mariel Geiger, I am the Climate Action Chair and Policy Lead for the [Surfrider Foundation's Maine chapter](#), testifying in support of LD 1122, which would strengthen the existing bag ban by more accurately defining single use bags thereby removing the exemption that allows thicker plastic bags at retail checkouts. Additionally, we are testifying in strong opposition of LD 56 and LD 69.

The [Surfrider Foundation](#) is a national nonprofit environmental organization with chapters in coastal states focused on ocean and coastal conservation. One of our priority missions is plastic pollution reduction.

Regarding the proposed amendment. We now know, based on bans with similar exemptions , that these exemptions have caused an increase in plastic bag waste, by weight, to the staggering figure of 46%, in states like California. First I want to emphasize that the bans are not the problem, they are still very much the solution, however by exempting thicker bags we are now finding that these bags are increasing waste and undermining the intent of the ban. Coupled with the now available evidence that the thicker bags are not being reused as the exemption was designed to allow for.

As an example in Maine, we have 19 Shaws locations and by all available calculations, nearly 13 million of these 4mil plastic bags are dispensed annually, from the 19 locations combined. When we consider the added plastic of the thicker bags and the knowledge that they are not being re-used to any level of significance, we are able to conclude that removing this exemption is a critical step to maintaining the efficacy of our current single use carry out bag legislation.

Further evidence that these 4 mil bags are being used in the same manner as the thinner pre-ban plastic bags is indicated by the regularity of the 4 mil bags seen in the waste stream of facilities like EcoMaine where their prevalence continues to clog their machinery and cause

costly delays. Also, per EcoMaine, these thicker bags are not recyclable in Maine. The changes proposed in LD 1122 are consistent with the values Mainers hold dear — protecting our natural resources, ensuring clean communities, and safeguarding our health.

We certainly very strongly oppose LD 69, the proposed repeal of our current law that provides critical single use plastic reduction. With the well known and widely documented impacts of toxic plastics on the environment, wildlife and human health, the last thing that we want to do is reverse course and rollback years of progress. In those few years even more very alarming studies have shown microplastics in human organs, including the brain, lungs and heart. Adding the correlation between microplastics in human hearts linked to higher risk of heart disease and heart attacks. I strongly urge committee members to vote against this repeal so that we can continue to diligently protect human health and the environment by reducing the use of toxic plastics.

LD 56 - We also strongly oppose the idea of eliminating the 5 cent fee. Fees have proven to be integral in the success of bag bans. Philadelphia, for example, saw a 157% increase in paper bag use after their ban was implemented without the fee. In contrast, Mountain View California saw a 67% decline, once the fee was added. The overwhelming evidence indicates that fees for paper bags incentivize consumers to shift toward more sustainable alternatives that are truly reusable.

We appreciate your continued dedication to Maine's leadership in environmental stewardship, ensuring a cleaner, healthier future for our communities and natural spaces!

Sincerely,

Mariel Geiger | Maine Chapter Climate Action Chair and Policy Lead

[Surfrider Foundation Maine Chapter](#) | climate@maine.surfrider.org



Protecting & preserving the world's oceans, beaches and coastline!

Sources:

(Frontier Group, Environment America Research & Policy Center, CALPIRG Education Fund 2024)

<https://publicinterestnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Plastic-Bag-Bans-Work-revd.pdf>

(CalRecycle, 2022)

(The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection 2023)

https://dep.nj.gov/newsrel/23_0027/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CMicroplastics%20have%20the%20potential%20of,to%202%20million%20per%20month.

(National Conference of State Legislatures, 2021).

National Library of Medicine & NIH National Institutes of Health

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9920460/#:~:text=Exposure%20to%20microplastics%20can%20also,urgent%20action%20is%20not%20taken.>

Harvard Medical School -

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/heart-health/microplastics-in-arteries-linked-to-heart-disease-risk>