

**Testimony before the
Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Nora Bosworth
Conservation Law Foundation
March 26, 2025**

RE: Testimony in Opposition to LD 56– An Act to Remove the 5 Cent Fee for Bags in Retail Stores

Good morning Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Nora Bosworth, and I am a Staff Attorney with the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF). CLF’s mission is to conserve natural resources, protect public health, and build healthy communities in Maine and throughout New England.

CLF opposes LD 56, which would eliminate the 5-cent fee consumers currently pay when a retail establishment provides a recycled paper or reusable plastic bag. Repealing this fee would increase waste and litter while having a negligible impact on consumers’ financial well-being.

LD 56 characterizes the existing 5-cent fee on certain retail bags as an “emergency”, framing the repeal as “immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety” of Mainers. However, portraying the 5-cent fee as a notable burden on household budgets is misleading. In reality, the 5-cent fee is a **consistent reminder** to bring reusable bags and move beyond a throwaway culture.

Importantly, **this reminder works**. A comprehensive 2024 report from multiple organizations found that plastic bag restrictions that do *not* place fees on paper bags result in consumers using new paper bags for every grocery trip. Although paper bags are widely recyclable (unlike plastic bags), they are more wasteful than bringing reusable bags.¹ A 2021 study in Philadelphia—where there is no such bag fee—found a 157% increase in supermarket customers leaving with paper bags after the single-use plastic bag restriction took effect. Conversely, a

¹ Louis Sokolow, Frontier Group, *Plastic Bag Bans Work*, E-S 5, Jan. 2024, available at <https://publicinterestnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Plastic-Bag-Bans-Work-January-2024.pdf>



study in Mountain View, Calif., where a 10-cent fee on paper bags was in place, observed a 67% *decline* in paper bag use after the ban was implemented.²

While minor, the 5-cent fee could be felt more by low-income Mainers. To rectify this potential inequity, LD 56 could be amended to **keep the fee** but create an **exemption for recipients of benefits** from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. This would align the law with similar policies elsewhere, without losing an effective incentive to bring reusable bags.

In sum, properly tailored restrictions on single-use bags **reduce litter**, conserve the resources needed for both paper and plastic bag production, and **promote sustainable practices**. Fees on single-use paper bags and reusable plastic bags further these outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in opposition to LD 56. We urge the committee to reject LD 56, as written, and vote ***Ought Not to Pass***.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nora Bosworth".

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² *Id.*