

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

RE: Testimony in Support of LD 1122 – An Act to Amend the Law Banning Single-Use Carry-Out Bags

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 enthusiastically **supports** LD 1122, which would increase the fee on single-use paper bags and reusable plastic carry-out bags while refining the definitions of reusable bags. This bill strengthens the plastic-bag restriction by preventing thicker, more wasteful plastic bags from replacing single-use plastic bags, only to be discarded at similar rates. Additionally, it increases the incentive for consumers to bring reusable bags when shopping.

A comprehensive report released in 2024 by multiple organizations shows that **plastic-bag restrictions work**: they **reduce litter**, and they **promote the use of reusable bags**, lowering plastic waste.¹ Coastal communities, like Maine, particularly benefit from these single-use bag restrictions; **plastic bags wind up in waterways**, harming marine life and water quality.²

However, such restrictions must be **thoughtfully tailored** to avoid unintended consequences that run contrary to the law’s main goal: **reducing plastic waste**.

Currently, certain stores in Maine sell thick plastic film bags that are characterized under the law as “reusable”, but in fact are largely thrown out after one or two uses. These bags create more plastic waste than the thinner, prohibited bags. LD 1122 fixes this by redefining carry-out bags such that consumers will truly view them as **reusable** and thus keep them out of our landfills.

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>

² *Id.* at E-S 4.



Additionally, unless there is a paper-bag fee that truly incentivizes using reusable bags, consumers will continue to merely shift to single-use paper bags. A 10-cent fee is likelier to modify consumer behavior, as proven in Vermont.³ Although paper bags are widely recyclable (unlike plastic bags), they are far more wasteful than bringing reusable bags.⁴

CLF cautions that while a 10-cent fee is not a burden for most, it could be felt more by low-income Mainers. To avoid this inequity, CLF recommends **adding language** to the bill to **exempt recipients of benefits** of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program from the fee. This would align the law with similar policies elsewhere, while strengthening the general incentive to bring reusable bags.

LD 112 would bolster a policy that has proven effective at reducing waste and litter and promoting sustainable practices. We urge this committee to **amend the bill as described above**, and vote **ought to pass**.

Respectfully submitted,

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³ *Id.* at 14.

⁴ *Id.* at E-S 5.