

Testimony in Opposition to LD 1423
“An Act to Improve Recycling by Updating the Stewardship Program for Packaging”
Heidi Sanborn, Executive Director, National Stewardship Action Council
April 23, 2025

My name is Heidi Sanborn, and I serve as Executive Director of the National Stewardship Action Council (NSAC), a nonprofit that advocates for a circular economy that works for people, the planet, and local economies

Maine passed the first EPR for Packaging law in the nation. That wasn't just a win for Maine. It set the tone for states like California, Colorado, Oregon, Minnesota and Maryland and maybe Washington to follow. In fact, when we were building SB 54 in California, Maine's bill helped us make the case. So thank you. You led the nation.

But that leadership is threatened.

This bill is not an update or an improvement. It's a rollback.

- It would delay implementation because it would restart the rulemaking process,
- introduce sweeping exemptions and producer-offramps,

Local governments have waited far too long for the relief promised to them. To withdraw that support now would not only undermine their recovery efforts but also extinguish the hope that has sustained them through these challenging times.

And from a national perspective, I can tell you: no other state has gutted its program before launch. Each state's EPR law looks different because the states are different. Maine's is tailored to your needs. That's a good thing. This is how federal policy will ultimately be shaped: by smart, adaptable state laws like yours. Your law is already designed to evolve. It doesn't make sense to exempt large swaths of packaging without having data collected by the program that show how much packaging that is and what it's made out of.

LD 1423 is a last gasp attempt to kill Maine's EPR for Packaging law. It's also a case study in corporate overreach: the same producers who've opposed EPR from the start now want to rewrite the rules at the last hour and shift costs back onto taxpayers. These aren't small tweaks—they're carveouts for entire industries. Additionally, they offer vague recycling thresholds, and a transparency rollback that would keep consumers, communities, and even you as lawmakers in the dark.

And let's talk about that transparency. Maine's law is one of the most transparent in the country—data disclosures, public rulemaking, and clear oversight. That's what makes this program strong. Yet this bill would take decision-making away from DEP and hand it to a private Stewardship Organization with minimal transparency and public accountability which is

basically a monopoly. That's not just a bad idea—it's the kind of power shift that erodes public trust, the bedrock of our democracy.

You may hear today that this bill is about aligning with other states. But the truth is, no state has done what this bill proposes, and all the states are slightly different because the states are different. And if Maine backtracks now, it sends a signal to other legislatures and producers that delay tactics and pressure campaigns work. That's not the kind of leadership Maine is known for.... And quite simply, we can't afford that—not for Maine's municipalities, not for other states watching you, and not for the planet and our local economies.

You've already done the hard work. The law is in the books. Rulemaking is complete. Communities are planning to be reimbursed in 2027 for 2026 costs. Don't let this bill unravel that progress.

We see in California what waffling has done on SB54 due to industry lobbying, so I say from experience, stay strong and lead with conviction. You did it right the first time and now is not the time to question, its time the implement.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to speak today.