

Nola Prevost
Brewer
LD 1423

Dear members of the Environment and Natural Resources committee, my name is Nola Prevost, I'm a writer and a Maine Master Naturalist working as an administrative specialist at the University of Maine, and I'm writing to encourage you to vote 'Ought Not To Pass' on LD 1423, as it attempts to roll back our current Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) packaging laws.

As someone who grew up in central Maine, I've seen how our towns have tried a multitude of different recycling programs to manage our waste. In 2021 Maine became the first in the nation to adopt EPR laws, and what excites me about this is that more than 40 jurisdictions world-wide have used EPR for Packaging to shift the costs of recycling from taxpayers to the producers of packaging, to much success. According to the data collected in those places, recycling rates more than doubled, keeping trash out of our landfills that are already near capacity, and most importantly, out of Maine's environment. And the "Polluters Pay" principle has encouraged companies to shift towards biodegradable alternatives to packaging, which is in my opinion the most effective and wide-reaching solution. But you don't even have to take my word for it, because the Maine Municipal Association has stated, "The cost of recycling has skyrocketed, forcing Maine communities to abandon recycling efforts to stem huge price increases that fall on the property taxpayer. EPR for packaging is a step in the right direction by asking producers to be part of the solution."

In the summers when I go on walks around the neighborhood, I pick up trash along the way, and I started bringing bags with me to collect the trash I would see. Just in one walk, I filled a whole shopping bag with plastic bottles, cigarette butts, food wrappers, and especially wrappers, from small bits of plastic that could easily get lodged in an animal's stomach, to whole jars of peanut butter and styrofoam coolers turned into squirrel nests. And sure, some of these things were maybe left behind by accident while others may have been purposeful, but the effect is the same. When these non-biodegradable materials enter the environment, they will continue circulating until they are disposed of properly. And the amount of roadside trash alone will only decrease with strong local recycling programs.

LD 1423 aims to delay implementation of EPR packaging laws and halt years of planning by towns and state agencies, and keep large corporations from paying for the waste that they produce. But Maine's communities and small businesses shouldn't have to wade through all that trash just to keep our towns going. We never asked for our food or our clothes or our furniture to come wrapped in plastic, we just wanted to be healthy and comfortable. And now that most people are aware of the dangers of introducing these kinds of waste into the environment, we are all looking for ways to reduce our impacts. But we can't do that if we keep producing waste at our current rate. Unfortunately, this bill would not serve the best interests of Maine's people, our communities, nor the environment. That is why I hope that LD 1423 does not pass, so that we can continue doing the work that needs to be done in order to keep Maine clean and healthy.

Thank you,
Nola