

Testimony of Greg and Lauren Soutiea – Co-owners of the Craignair Inn by the Sea LLC and Causeway Restaurant in St. George, Maine.

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Sen. Tepler, Rep. Gramlich, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Greg Soutiea and together with my wife Lauren Soutiea, we have owned the Award-Winning Craignair Inn by the Sea and Causeway Restaurant in St. George for over 6 years now. We have grown the seasonal restaurant from 7 employees to now over 50 in peak season and a year-round restaurant giving us the opportunity to support 20+ of our staff with year-round jobs.

We would like to testify in support of Representative Gramlich’s bill: An Act to Prohibit Lodging Establishments from Providing Single-use Plastic Containers.

In 2019, our first year of owning the Craignair Inn by the Sea, we converted the property to refillable, tamper-proof 16oz bottles of shampoo, conditioner, and body wash. The upfront cost of approximately \$2200 was recovered in a little over a year and has continued to provide significant cost savings on these products. To purchase 1.5 ounce bottles the average cost per year would have been \$2,311 (looking at historical occupancy) but we have averaged only \$550 per year on gallon bottles of soap/shampoo/body wash. We estimate a total cost savings of about \$8,360 or almost \$1,400 annually.

However, the impetus for the bill is not cost savings, it is much needed plastic reduction for the natural environment that makes Maine, Maine. As such, we can say conclusively that we have reduced plastic use considerably for our soap/shampoo/body wash over the same 6-year time span. A one-gallon plastic bottle uses about 120-150 grams of plastic while a 1.2-ounce bottle uses approximately 42.5 grams. Using this information, we can conclude that a 1-gallon bottle uses about 24-times less plastic than the equivalent number of 1.5-ounce bottles (at a bare minimum assuming every ounce of liquid was used from the 1.5 oz bottles).

This testimony is at odds with that of Hospitality Maine, where I proudly serve on the Board of Directors, and where our Legislative Committee has discussed this bill at length. While I understand that there are some concerns about putting yet another legislative requirement on small businesses and especially another one on the hospitality industry; in this instance I believe that the benefits outweigh any potential drawbacks.



I would also like to note that I disagree with any suggested “concerns for sanitary and hygiene reasons” as you have or may hear today. All the products on the market which I have seen are tamperproof/resistant and as you can see from the image here of the product, we use it has a metal lock on the containers that requires a specially designed key only available through the manufacturer.

I would however urge this Committee to remove the exemption for stand-alone cabins, cottages, or apartments that are used for short-term rentals. If the Hospitality industry needs to conform to this new regulation, all short-term rentals in the state should also be held to the same standard.

Testimony respectfully submitted on May 10th, 2025.