Testimony of Kevin Roche, CEO of **ecomaine**

Before the

Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

In Support Of

LD 1431, *Resolve, To Support Municipal Recycling Programs*

April 18, 2019

Senator Carson, Representative Tucker, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Kevin Roche and I serve as the CEO of **ecomaine**.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you with regard to LD 1431, *Resolve, To Support Municipal Recycling Programs*. I am testifying in support of LD 1431 because **ecomaine** supports efforts to make certain manufacturers make packaging recyclable. This is of significant interest to us, because **ecomaine** operates one of the largest recycling programs in the state.

ecomaine is a municipally owned organization that provides solid waste and recycling services to 73 member communities in Maine. The organization is run by a 27 member Board of Directors that are appointed by each of our 20 owner communities. Our mission statement describes us best:

> ***ecomaine*** *provides comprehensive long-term solid waste solutions in a safe, environmentally responsible, economically sound manner and is a leader in raising public awareness of sustainable waste management strategies.*

We operate five important facilities and programs that focus on the industry's best practices:

- Maine's largest Recycling Facility
- A food waste recovery program
- A Waste-to-Energy (WTE) facility generating nearly 90,000 megawatt hours of electricity each year and reducing the volume of trash by 90%
- A Landfill/Ashfill site, and
- An Outreach and Education Program that is second to none

ecomaine takes an aggressive approach to outreach and education to ensure that we are connecting with our residents and businesses on important solid waste and recycling related

issues. The results speak for themselves achieving high levels of recycling participation and an understanding of our mission. Last year, we personally connected with over 25,000 residents in our communities through tours, presentations, an open house and through the many events we participated in. We feel that those residents that spend an hour with us will help get the word out to many others in our communities on effective solid waste management practices.

We applaud the sponsors for bringing this proposal forward to establish a product stewardship program for packaging. It is an obvious point, but needs to be stated. Packaging materials made from non-recyclable or difficult and expensive to recycle materials will not be recycled. For example, we've seen a significant transition from ridged plastic packaging to flexible packaging and these changes have been really challenging for the recycling industry. Few to no markets exist for flexible packaging. Think of the laundry and dish detergents that have switched from the plastic bottle or jug to the pouch or bag. These are just a couple examples that we see happening. Maine should require that manufacturers consider the disposal of packaging materials in designing, marketing, and distributing products. LD 1431 will advance that goal.

At the same time, there is a significant amount of packaging already being recycled. **ecomaine** handles a variety of packaging every day in our single-sort facility. Any stewardship program must be designed in a way that allows those successful efforts to continue. Let's build on what we have, rather than establish an entirely new collection and processing system.

A key point I've made to this Committee earlier this year and that applies to this bill as well, is that transportation of waste creates significant environmental impacts. Maine communities statewide are already gathering solid waste and recycling material. A significant amount of packaging is being gathered as a part of those efforts. Additional recyclable packaging should be collected through those existing transportation networks, rather than creating a new network just for packaging. That will be the most efficient solution in terms of cost to communities and manufacturers and will limit transportation related emissions. Maine should strengthen our existing collection system rather than create a new system running in parallel to what we already have.

ecomaine supports LD 1431. Please establish a product stewardship program requiring that manufacturers make packaging recyclable and that they take responsibility for those costs associated with recycling those materials. In doing so, please build on our existing recycling infrastructure.

I would be happy to discuss this in further detail if you have additional questions.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide information on these important recycling policy issues.