



Remarks of Chris Emerson, General Manager, Coca Cola Bangor  
Neither for nor against LD 134  
March 29, 2023

My Name is Chris Emerson and I live in Hampden. I am the General Manager for the Coca-Cola Bangor and Presque Isle Facilities. We employ approximately 100 people. I grew up in Maine and Graduated from UMO in 2001 and both my children will attend there this fall. I certainly care deeply about the success of Maine as a place to live.

I started with Coca Cola as an intern 23 years ago when I was at UMaine. I then worked for 10 years with Coca Cola in New Hampshire before returning to Bangor. I know from first hand experience – having negotiated contracts with retailers in both states – that there is cost to the bottle bill. And folks in Maine pay more for their beverages than folks in New Hampshire because of it. The handling fees that we pay – which is the highest in New England – is passed along to retail and, ultimately, paid by the Maine consumer. This drives up costs and depletes the purchasing power of the Maine consumer. I have provided some recent figures of online pricing differences from Walmart in Portsmouth NH and Walmart in Bangor that demonstrate this.

We need to protect the environment and our company wants to collect the bottles that we sell. They are 100% recyclable so that we can turn them into new bottles. They should not be in landfills or lakes or rivers. But we also need to be mindful of the cost to Maine consumers. The bottle bill has not kept up with technology and simply increasing the handling fee without examining the underlying costs just kicks the can down the road.

We work closely with redemption centers in Maine. They are our partners in making the bottle bill work. If there are ways to make improvements to our overall collection system that can significantly lower labor costs for redemption centers without the Maine consumers being impacted so negatively, those should be the first ideas we should try. Please consider the proposal to eliminate manual brand sorting, instead of increasing handling fees to Maine consumers.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts with you today.

