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Testimony of Rep. Lori K. Gramlich presenting

**LD 1418, An Act Concerning Single-use Disposable Water Bottles
and Water Refill Stations**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Senator Brenner and honorable colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, I am Rep Lori Gramlich I represent House District 113, the beautiful seaside community of Old Orchard Beach Thank you for the opportunity to present **LD 1418, An Act Concerning Single-use Disposable Water Bottles and Water Refill Stations**

Single-use plastic water bottles are one of the most commonly used types of plastic, and they are also one of the most damaging They harm wildlife and contribute to greenhouse gas emissions They are part of the truly staggering amount of plastic that pollutes our oceans, with eight million metric tons of plastic entering the ocean each year,¹ harming marine life and breaking down into microplastics that enter the food chain and ultimately affect human health

Plastic takes hundreds of years to break down, which means that even if it is buried in a landfill, it will remain there for a very long time As plastic breaks down, it can release harmful chemicals into the environment In addition, landfills can become overwhelmed with plastic waste, leading to environmental and health risks for nearby communities

By phasing out single-use plastic water bottles and encouraging reusable containers, we can take a significant step towards reducing plastic waste and protecting our planet We can reduce the amount of plastic waste that ends up in landfills and oceans, lower the overall consumption of plastic and decrease the demand for fossil fuels used in the production of plastic bottles

It is clear that single-use plastic is a problem we need to address - for our planet, our wildlife and our health

¹ <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/hazards/marinedebris/plastics-in-the-ocean.html>

LD 1418 would address single-use plastic water bottles by prohibiting state entities, buildings and functions from serving or selling water in single-use plastic bottles, requiring instead that water filling stations are available so that state employees and members of the public alike have the opportunity to access clean, healthy drinking water using reusable containers

There are reasons that single-use water bottles are so ubiquitous. They are convenient, and they can help address a very real problem for people who do not have access to clean drinking water. LD 1418 recognizes these challenges and, instead of simply banning single-use plastic water bottles, it helps to provide suitable alternatives so that we maintain and even improve access to the one thing none of us can live without: clean water.

Water refill stations allow individuals to refill their reusable containers with clean, fresh water, eliminating the need to offer single-use water bottles in the first place. They are convenient and environmentally friendly. They even offer economic benefits, since free public water stations save people money when compared to purchasing single-use water bottles, and decreasing the use of single-use plastics also reduces pressure on the waste management stream.

As written, Section 4 of the bill also addresses water refill stations at retail establishments. Ultimately, I believe our goal must be to reduce single-use plastic water bottles in all settings, but I am mindful of the importance of setting realistic timeframes and requirements for our business establishments. I ask the committee to consider amending the bill so that it only pertains to buildings in the State House complex or perhaps state buildings generally. This will give us the opportunity to do the right thing ourselves and model the behavior we want to see right here in state government, and it will give us the chance to examine a longer timeline to work with the private sector to accomplish this goal more broadly. I look forward to working with the committee to finalize an amendment to this effect.

LD 1418 is an important step to preserve our natural resources, protect our wildlife, prevent unnecessary pollution and subsequent human health effects, and promote responsible behaviors. Together, we can create a more sustainable future.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have for me.