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AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002
(207) 287-1400
TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

Allison Hepler

417 Montsweag Rd.
Woolwich, ME 04579
Phone: (207) 319-4396

Allison.Hepler@legislature.maine.gov

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*Testimony of Rep. Allison Hepler
presenting*

LD 2134, An Act Regarding Responsibility for Activities Intended to Increase the Use of Refillable and Reusable Beverage Containers

Before the Joint Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources

Good morning, Sen. Brenner, Rep. Gramlich and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. I am Allison Hepler and I represent the towns of Arrowsic, Georgetown, Phippsburg, West Bath and Woolwich. I am here today to present **LD 2134, An Act Regarding Responsibility for Activities Intended to Increase the Use of Refillable and Reusable Beverage Containers.**

Last year, I was honored to work with this committee on LD 1909, An Act to Modernize Maine's Bottle Redemption Law. I'm very grateful for your hard work and your incredible amount of patience in crafting an excellent outcome. And I'm pleased to have been part of that process.

LD 2134 makes a small administrative change to that bill, which is now law. You may remember that LD 1909 created the Cost and Carbon Efficient Technology Fund within DEP, funded by \$1 million of the unclaimed beverage container deposits that are collected by the commingling cooperative. The intent was that the fund would provide grants for investments in technology to improve efficiency in the bottle redemption program, and also fund activities designed to increase the use of refillable and reuseable beverage containers. The intent behind LD 1909 was that each program would be funded with \$500,000.

LD 2134 moves the funding and administration of the refillable and reuse program to the commingling cooperative. None of the requirements of this program have changed. With these funds, the cooperative must still complete a study to determine the feasibility of meeting certain goals to increase the use of refillable and reuseable beverage containers in the state; fund activities and infrastructure to develop and implement models for refillable beverage container washing techniques; develop container options; and conduct outreach to manufacturers, retailers, restaurants and consumers regarding the benefits of safe reuse. LD 2134 maintains \$500,000 in the Cost and Carbon Efficient Technology Fund and the remaining \$500,000 will be used by the cooperative to improve reuse and refill in the beverage industry.

Why is this bill needed? LD 1909 was the result of many compromises from all of the stakeholders and all were in agreement then that it was better for the refillable program to be housed within the cooperative, since it's the beverage industry that needs to invest in refill and reuse activities. LD 2134 will do this and also streamline the work. The Department of Environmental Protection maintains its ultimate oversight of the cooperative's activities, in addition to a third-party audit. I also have a few minor language additions.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to take any questions you may have.

District 49: Arrowsic, Georgetown, Phippsburg, West Bath and Woolwich