



# Natural Resources Council of Maine

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**Testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 2134,  
An Act Regarding Responsibility for Actions Intended to Increase the Use of Reusable and  
Refillable Beverage Containers**

*Vanessa Berry, NRCM Sustainable Maine Outreach Coordinator*

*January 24, 2024*

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Vanessa Berry, and I am the Sustainable Maine Outreach Coordinator for the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM). I am here to offer testimony neither for nor against LD 2134.

First, I'd like to thank the Committee for your unanimous support of the Bottle Bill (LD 1909) modernization effort last year. The two bills (LD 1909 and LD 134) that passed through the Legislature saved the Bottle Bill from collapse, protected jobs, and modernized the program for continued success. The Bottle Bill remains Maine's most effective recycling program to keep valuable materials in circulation, drastically reduce litter, and save taxpayer money. We appreciate this Committee's steadfast support for the program over the years.

From our perspective, one of the most exciting new additions to Maine's Bottle Bill program is the funding directed toward development of reusable, refillable beverage containers. There are a lot of opportunities for business development and resource conservation through reuse of containers, which is one step higher than recycling on our State's solid waste management hierarchy. Passage of LD 1909 last year placed the responsibility of facilitating reuse activities with the Department of Environmental Protection staff. This bill (LD 2134) would transfer those responsibilities to the commingling cooperative that will be managing the Bottle Bill program.

The commingling cooperative will represent beverage manufacturers and Bottle Bill material processors. While we believe this move has the potential to streamline some of the anticipated investments in reuse and refillable opportunities, there are some areas within the bill that give us cause for concern. For example, the bill as enacted allows for anyone to apply for funding through the Cost and Carbon Efficient Technology Fund, but the proposed changes may limit or prohibit nonprofits, municipalities, or other businesses outside the cooperative from utilizing these funds to advance reuse in the state.

To address this concern, we ask the Committee to consider strengthening the language so that the funds will also be made available to grantees outside of the commingling cooperative to support small business expansion into all manners of reusable packaging activities in the state, as LD 1909 intended last year. Additionally, we ask the Committee to carefully consider the comments and concerns highlighted by our colleagues at Upstream, an organization that supports the implementation of reusable container programs around North America.

I appreciate this opportunity to testify on LD 2134, and again extend our thanks for this Committee's steadfast support of Maine's Bottle Bill program.