



# Natural Resources Council of Maine

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## **Testimony in Support of LD 1035, Resolve, to Study the Safe Disposal of Single-use Propane Canisters**

*Vanessa Berry, NRCM Sustainable Maine Program Manager  
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Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Vanessa Berry. I am the Sustainable Maine Program Manager for the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM). I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of LD 1035.

NRCM is Maine's leading environmental advocacy organization. Our staff, members, and supporters are avid supporters of outdoor recreation. Because of this, we support initiatives to make outdoor recreation experiences more sustainable.

One-pound propane cylinders are used for lanterns, cooking appliances, portable heaters, and other outdoor gear. The design of these canisters makes them very useful for travel, but canister disposal is problematic. The valves used to fill these small propane canisters are not designed to be refilled. This makes it difficult to know whether containers are fully emptied, making the vessels single use by design and posing safety risks when handling the empty containers. Several years ago, I personally experienced a near-miss during a dangerous incident in a recycling facility when a propane canister was compacted with other ferrous metals in a baler. These small tanks contain a lot of pressure and pose serious risks to waste haulers, transfer station operators, and material processors who might encounter them unknowingly if they're discarded in a trash bag or mixed in a large pile of residential recycling.

Currently there are very few options for proper disposal or recycling of these one-pound cylinders, which results in improper and unsafe disposal or littering of these containers. However, as we understand it, one-pound propane cylinders should be covered within Maine's Product Stewardship Program for Packaging, which is in its early stages of implementation. With fees on packaging based on their recyclability and other factors, this program should encourage manufacturers to consider alternative design for their packaging to allow the containers to be safely refilled by consumers or otherwise incentivize the use of an alternative collection program, such as an exchange of containers similar to retail programs existing for 20-pound propane tanks.

LD 1035 recognizes that single-use propane tanks can pose safety challenges in the waste stream and may warrant their own take-back system to provide for safe, responsible collection for used propane cylinders at the end of their useful life. We support the proposed evaluation of the current infrastructure for such a collection program, as proposed by LD 1035, and to also explore possible restrictions on propane tanks that are not designed to be refillable. I appreciate the opportunity to share these thoughts on LD 1035.