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LD 56 - An Act to Remove the 5 Cent Fee for Bags in Retail Stores.

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Sen. Teplar, Rep. Doudera and distinguished members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, I am Rep. Michael Lemelin of House District 53 representing Chelsea, Randolph, Pittston, and Dresden. I am here to present LD 572 - *An Act to Remove the 5 Cent Fee for Bags in Retail Stores.*

The five-cent bag fee was implemented to compensate stores for the increase cost of paper bags instead of plastic. Stores have always used paper bags and there was really little if any real additional cost. When I buy \$100 of groceries the store can cover the cost of a few bags. It has imposed a huge burden on the poor and people who are on welfare and cannot afford the extra burden. Cashiers do not like to ask if you want bags. The fee serves no purpose except to aggravate the customer. It places store employees in an unfortunate circumstance to ask people to pay the fee.

A five cent bag fee does not get people to bring their own bags. It forces workers to break the law by giving the bags away to the poor, and forces stores to retrieve more carts and baskets from their parking lots. People should not have to carry out food in their arms. The poor and elderly are being trampled upon with this request.

It is not about I forgot my bags. It is about sanitation, and a complete inconvenience to most Mainers. Plastic bags are gone, and reusable bags need to be next.

If reusable bags aren't sanitized properly after each use, they can harbor dangerous viruses and bacteria. Microbiologists have found E. coli, salmonella, fecal coliform, and other harmful bacteria in reusable bags.

- A study by the University of Arizona found that 51% of all reusable bags contained coliform bacteria. The same study

found that **97% of individuals admitted that they never washed their reusable bags.**

- Harmful bacteria can thrive in reusable bags unless users clean them properly after each use with soapy water that is at least 140 degrees.
- A Canadian study found bacteria build-up on reusable bags was 300% higher than what is considered safe.
- Storing reusable bags in a hot trunk — which many people do — causes the bacteria to grow 10 times faster.
- A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that COVID-19 can live up to three days on polypropylene, which is the material that most reusable bags are made of.
- A 2018 study in the Journal of Environmental Health concluded that reusable bags are very effective in transmitting infectious viruses from private homes to supermarket grocery carts and checkout stands.
- In 2013, millions of American piglets died amid an outbreak of novel swine enteric coronavirus disease, and after an investigation the U.S. Department of Agriculture concluded that reusable feed totes were the most likely root cause. The feed bags are often made of the same kind of material as reusable shopping bags (polypropylene).
- In 2010, several Oregon teens and adults fell ill after attending a soccer tournament. Scientists traced the sickness to a reusable grocery bag, “which had been stored in a bathroom used before the outbreak by a person with a norovirus-like illness.”
- California researchers studying the potential of reusable bags to transmit infectious diseases found that a contaminated reusable bag would cross-contaminate any surface it came into contact with, putting nine out of 10 people who go to that grocery store at risk of infection. shopping bags (polypropylene).

Keep in mind that facts are never outdated!

Less than 1% of Mainers are in favor of the five-cent charge. It is a huge inconvenience and does not serve the purpose of which it was originally intended.