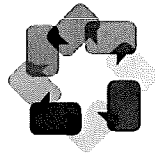


Maine Grocers &
Food Producers
Association
PO Box 5234
Augusta, ME 04332
207.622.4461
info@mgfpa.org



**RETAIL
ASSOCIATION OF
MAINE**
Voice of Maine Retail

Retail Association of Maine
45 Melville Street, Suite 1
Augusta, ME 04330
Tel: 207.623.1149 | Mobile:
207.240.7377
curtis@retailmaine.org
www.retailmaine.org

March 26th, 2025

RE: IN OPPOSITION to LD 56 'An Act to Remove the 5 Cent Fee for Bags in Retail Stores', LD 69 'An Act to Repeal the Law Restricting the Use of Certain Plastic, Paper and Single-use Bags', and LD 1122 'An Act to Amend the Law Banning Single-use Carry-out Bags'

Dear Senator Tepler - Chair, Representative Doudera - Chair, and members of the committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

My name is Curtis Picard and I am the President and CEO of the Retail Association of Maine. I am a resident of Topsham. We have more than 350 members statewide and represent retailers of all sizes. Maine's retailers employ more than 85,000 Mainers. In the interest of time, I am also submitting comments on behalf of the Maine Grocers and Food Producers Association. MGFPA is a business trade association representing more than 200 businesses within Maine's food community; Main Street businesses including independently owned and operated grocery stores and supermarkets, food and beverage producers and processors, manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, and supportive service companies. Both of our organizations are testifying in strong opposition to LD 56, LD 69 and LD 1122.

History of Maine's Plastic Bag Ban:

In 2019, both of our associations alongside a number of our retail members, policymakers, and the Natural Resources Council of Maine collaborated on our uniform, statewide single-use plastic bag policy. We had transparent, honest conversations about our challenges and goals to address plastic bags. We worked diligently to determine the law's details and found areas of compromise for both the business community, environmentalists and ultimately, Mainers. The law has been in effect since July of 2021 and we have not heard feedback from our members for policy modifications. Our state's retailers have worked hard to implement the law and source permitted alternatives. Retailers, partners and the state have all actively promoted the current plastic bag law which offers consistency throughout the state and feasibility. Consumers have, and are, in turn modifying their habits to reduce plastic and increase the use of re-useable bags (or other alternatives to carry their purchases). We oppose efforts to modify or impede the effectiveness of Maine's current plastic bag ban policy.

Since its implementation, we have seen a measurable decrease in plastic litter in our waterways, parks, and coastal areas. Anecdotally, we have seen less plastic in the environment as previously witnessed prior to this policy put in place 4 years ago.

LD 1122 'An Act to Amend the Law Banning Single-use Carry-out Bags':

We are discouraged that the proponents of LD 1122 did not seek out collaboration before Monday of this week with the public hearing scheduled on Wednesday (today).

4ml: In Maine, 4ml plastic bags are not widely used by retailers. While some businesses have turned to reusable or paper options, the 4ml plastic bags—have not gained significant traction. We are aware of two retailers opting for this bag type in Maine (despite other storefronts who do not operate here being depicted in the testimony). These stores have opted for them out of consumer preference. For example, for shoppers in walking communities, the 4ml plastic bags can provide a durable and weather-resistant option for carrying groceries and other purchases (unlike paper bags, which can tear in rain or snow, these plastic bags offer reliability for those who rely on walking as their primary mode of transportation). **Finding a balance between sustainability and practicality remains essential, and Maine’s plastic bag policy continues to offer this.**

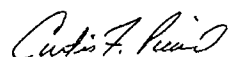
As Maine considers restricting 4ml plastic bags, it’s important to question whether these bags are truly contributing to plastic waste issues. Are recyclers still seeing significant amounts of problematic plastic in the waste stream, or have retailer policies and consumer habits already shifted toward responsible reuse and disposal? If plastic bags are being reused multiple times as intended, do they pose the same environmental concern as thinner, single-use alternatives? **Understanding the actual impact on recycling systems and waste management is critical before further limiting options for retailers and consumers, particularly in walking communities where durable bags are essential.**

Fee: As noted previously, we stand supportive of the current 5 cents minimum bag fee. Increasing the bag fee from 5 cents to 10 cents disproportionately impacts low-income individuals and families who may struggle with even small price increases. Raising the fee may not necessarily lead to alternatives.

Paper Bag Resources, Requirements, New Definitions: Prohibiting all plastic bags could lead to paper bag sourcing issues, as the demand for paper bags would increase. Paper bags require more resources to produce, including water, energy, and trees, which could strain supply chains and increase costs. In looking to learn more, we’ve determined that most paper bags are 100% recyclable nowadays – however, **we were unable to determine the PCR and PIR breakouts in the 100% recycled material bags.** If new “Recycled paper carry-out bag” specifications are to be put into law, it would be imperative to ensure they’re accessible as comparable costs and with adequate market availability. Similarly, if a new definition of “Reusable fabric carry-out bag” is put into law, we want to ensure the specified requirements for this bag-type defines a product that is able to sourced in the market (ex: a distance of 300 ft is extreme compared to a more standard distance of 175 ft).

Retailers across our state have put in significant effort to comply with the law and secure approved alternatives. Businesses, stakeholders, and the state have all played an active role in promoting the existing plastic bag regulations, ensuring uniformity and practicality statewide. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Curtis Picard, President & CEO,
Retail Association of Maine
45 Melville St., Augusta, ME 04330
curtis@retailmaine.org | 207-623-1149



Christine Cummings, Executive Director,
Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association
PO Box 5234, Augusta, ME 04332
christine@mgfpa.org | 207-622-4461