

Public Testimony on Maine's Plastic Bag Ban and Related Legislation

Good morning, esteemed members of the committee for Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Donna Goodridge, I am a proud citizen of Greenwood, Maine as well as a dedicated SurfRider Beach Guardian, committed to protecting the health of our Earth and Ocean.

I stand before you today to express my support for the amendment to the plastic bag ban LD1122, my strong opposition to the repeal of the current plastic bag ban; LD 69, and my firm belief that the 5-cent bag fee should remain in place; LD56.

First and foremost, we need to diminish our plastic usage as much and as quickly as possible. Plastic pollution is not just an eyesore—it is a pervasive and toxic threat to our environment. The current loophole in the plastic bag ban is alarming. Despite the law, we are still using an estimated 1 million plastic bags monthly here in Maine. This is a direct result of allowing the use of thicker plastic bags, thereby undermining the purpose of the ban.

As a Maine resident, I've spent much of my life in and around our lakes, rivers, and coastline. I love to swim and fish in crystal clear waters and I'm drawn to our natural spaces for recreation. But, as many of you know, these spaces are increasingly littered with plastic waste. In my role as a SurfRider Beach Guardian, I spend countless hours combing our beaches and coastlines, collecting debris—much of it plastic. I see firsthand the impact this waste has on our environment, our wildlife, and our communities.

Moreover, as a lifelong health professional, I understand the risks of toxic materials in our bodies and in our environment. Plastics, particularly microplastics; tiny plastic particles less than 5mm, pose serious health threats. They contaminate our food chain and water sources, and they persist in our ecosystem for hundreds of years. Microplastics have been shown to cause inflammation, neurotoxicity, disruption of hormone balance including male and female reproductive problems and disturbance to gut microbiome, these are some of the known deleterious effects. A less insidious effect of plastic bags is the death of a baby otter from suffocation in a plastic bag he could not get free from. The science is clear: continued plastic pollution poses a danger to human, animal and plant health: the overall health of the planet.

We all have a responsibility to protect the natural world for future generations. Our role on this Earth is one of stewardship. The actions we take today will determine the future we leave behind. By supporting the amendment to the plastic bag ban and opposing the repeal of both the current ban and the 5-cent bag fee, we are taking meaningful steps toward a cleaner, healthier Maine and a cleaner, healthier world.

Thank you for your time and consideration.