

Lincoln's Country Store
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April 9, 2025

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
State House
Augusta ME

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

My name is John Guerra and I am here in support of LD 1306. Since 2019, I have owned and operated Lincoln's Country Store, a small grocery store located within a working-class community in the mid-coast region. Similar to many rural regions across Maine, the residents there would be significantly underserved if not for the presence of an independent grocer.

In the four years since the use of polystyrene foam trays was last addressed, the performance of the alternative compostable trays has not improved compared to the standard tray. As we have learned through experience and from several meat departments in nearby chains, the compostable trays are prone to:

Soaking up liquids within a day or so, becoming flimsy and unappealing to consumers. This can be offset somewhat by increasing the number of absorbent pads used; which then add to the waste stream

Cracking and breakage with normal handling and stocking

A significant percentage of meat packages require re-wrapping, including a new tray. This results in further waste of materials and labor

Increased food waste due to excess handling and leakage

Of greater concern is the added cost of the new trays:

The current foam trays cost us, on average, about 9.5 cents a piece

The replacement compostable trays will cost, on average, 36 cents a piece

Annually spend about \$15,000 for conventional trays.

At today's costs, this expense will jump to over **\$55,000 annually** to convert to compostables

Combined with the added labor required to re-wrap and the potential loss of product, the conversion to compostables will be another major cost increase. Being a single operation, there is no means of mitigating this cost other than to pass it on to the consumer.

My hope is that the committee recognizes the critical role small grocers play in serving rural communities across Maine and will continue to help to minimize costs that the large chains can readily deflect. Please move in support of LD 1306 and its specified exemptions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Guerra