



For a thriving New England

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**Testimony before the
Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Nora Bosworth
Conservation Law Foundation
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RE: Testimony in Support of LD 1065 – An Act Regarding the Reduction and Recycling of Food Waste

Good morning Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Nora Bosworth, and I am a Staff Attorney with the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF). CLF's mission is to conserve natural resources, protect public health, and build healthy communities in Maine and throughout New England.

Conservation Law Foundation ("CLF") enthusiastically supports LD 1065, An Act Regarding the Reduction and Recycling of Food Waste. The bill strengthens Maine's existing Food Recovery Hierarchy, which sets up a clear system for managing food waste. This hierarchy puts feeding hungry people first, followed by using food for farming (like animal feed), then composting and anaerobic digestion, with landfilling and incineration as the last resort. 38 M.R.S.A §2101-B.

The bill also phases in two requirements over time. By July 1, 2027, businesses or institutions that produce at least two tons of food waste per week and are within 20 miles of an organics recycling facility, won't be allowed to send that leftover food to a landfill or incinerator. By July 1, 2029, this requirement will apply to those generating at least one ton per week and located within 25 miles of an organics recycling facility.

LD 1065 would support Maine's waste reduction goals, preserve landfill space, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and save the resources used to produce wasted food. It would also help Mainers in need by prioritizing food donations. On top of this, this bill could grow Maine's recycling and composting economy, creating jobs and increasing revenue. Maine already leads in sustainability in various ways—diverting food waste from landfills is a natural next step. Every other state in New England has enacted similar bills, and seen environmental, social, and economic benefits.

Keeping food out of our landfills and incinerators will help Maine meet its waste reduction targets. State law, 38 M.R.S.A §2132, says that by 2021 Maine should be recycling or composting half of its municipal solid waste, and should reduce our waste disposal rate by 5% per person every 5 years.¹ We know from the Department of Environmental Protection's reporting that Maine has not met these goals.² Moreover, as seen in the current attempt to expand Juniper Ridge Landfill, Maine faces a landfill capacity issue.

Food waste is the largest component of landfill waste, constituting, by EPA estimates, 24% of municipal landfill material.³ An estimated 30-40% of all food is wasted.⁴ Legislation like LD 1065 can change these numbers. Massachusetts' food waste ban has diverted more than 380,000 tons of food waste each year. In short, this type of legislation works. Keeping food waste out of our landfills would immediately and significantly reduce the amount of waste we bury, helping us meet our state's goals.

Besides saving landfill space, this bill would reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Food rotting in landfills creates methane, a greenhouse gas that is over 80 times more powerful than carbon dioxide.⁵ The EPA has found that landfills are the third-largest source of human-caused methane emissions in the U.S.⁶ When we throw away food we also waste the water, land, labor, and energy used to grow and deliver the food.⁷ A 2021 EPA report said that reducing food waste is *essential* if the U.S. wants to meet its climate goals.⁸ LD 1065 would also help Maine meet its target of being carbon neutral by 2045.⁹

The amount of food sent to landfills is an even bigger loss when we consider how many Mainers are food insecure. One in five, or 18.7% of Maine's children live in food-insecure households –

¹ 38 M.R.S.A. 2132

² Maine Department of Environmental Protection, 2020&2021 Municipal Solid Waste Generation & Disposal, 9-10, Jan. 2023, available at [2023-DEP-WGDC-Report-CY-2020-21 \(3\).pdf](https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2021-11/2023-DEP-WGDC-Report-CY-2020-21_3.pdf)

³ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Facts and Figures about Materials, Waste and Recycling, available at <https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/national-overview-facts-and-figures-materials#Landfilling>

⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Waste FAQs, available at <https://www.usda.gov/foodwaste/faqs>

⁵ USDA, Food Waste and its Links to Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change, available at <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2022/01/24/food-waste-and-its-links-greenhouse-gases-and-climate-change>; Importance of Methane | US EPA; Environmental Defense Fund, Methane: A Crucial Opportunity in the Climate Fight, available at <https://www.edf.org/climate/methane-crucial-opportunity-climate-fight>

⁶ EPA, Basic Information about Landfill Gas, available at <https://www.epa.gov/lmop/basic-information-about-landfill-gas>

⁷ EPA, Composting Food Waste: Keeping a Good Thing Going, available at <https://www.epa.gov/snep/composting-food-waste-keeping-good-thing-going>

⁸ EPA, From Farm to Kitchen: the Environmental Impacts of U.S. Food Waste, Nov. 2021, at ii, available at https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2021-11/from-farm-to-kitchen-theenvironmental-impacts-of-u.s.-food-waste_508-tagged.pdf.

⁹ 38 M.R.S.A 576-A



the highest rate of child food insecurity in New England.¹⁰ LD 1065 will increase food donation. In Vermont, food donations nearly tripled after Vermont's food scrap law was passed.¹¹ With thousands of Mainers still at risk of hunger, this bill is the right thing to do.

Finally, LD 1065 could boost Maine's economy. In 2014, Massachusetts became the first state to restrict disposal of commercial food waste for major producers.¹² Two years later, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection found that the disposal ban had created hundreds of well-paying jobs, increased the Gross State Product by \$77 million, and generated more than \$5 million in state and local tax revenue.¹³ Maine can expect similar economic benefits by growing its food waste recycling sector, which this bill would encourage.

This bill would affect major waste generators like food manufacturers, grocery stores, schools, universities, and large office buildings. While businesses may face increased costs—such as hauling fees, equipment, software, and training—these are often offset by savings from reduced purchasing and disposal costs, tax incentives, and improved public image. A World Resources Institute study found that for half the U.S. businesses analyzed, every dollar spent on food waste reduction yielded over \$14 in savings.¹⁴ In turn, organic waste haulers, processors, and food rescue organizations, experience significant growth.¹⁵

For the above environmental, social and economic reasons, CLF urges the committee to vote ought to pass for LD 1065.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nora Bosworth", is written over a horizontal line.

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¹⁰ Government Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF), Ending Hunger in Maine, 2024 Annual Report, February 2025, available at https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/2025-02/GOPIF_EndingHunger021025_2_0.pdf

¹¹ Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Universal Recycling Law Boosts Fresh Food Donations, available at <https://anr.vermont.gov/node/901>

¹² Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Commercial Food Material Disposal Ban, <https://www.mass.gov/guides/commercial-food-material-disposal-ban#-economic-impact->

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ Food Law and Policy Clinic, Harvard Law School, Bans and Beyond, 20, July 2019, available at https://chlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Organic-Waste-Bans_FINAL-compressed.pdf

¹⁵ MA Commercial Food Waste Ban Economic Analysis, Dec. 2016, 4, available at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-commercial-food-waste-ban-economic-impact-analysis/download>