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**Testimony of Kevin Roche, General Manager, ecomaine
before the Committee on the Environment & Natural Resources in
opposition to LD 1423, An Act To Improve Recycling by Updating the
Stewardship Program for Packaging
April 23, 2025**

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition of this legislation. My name is Kevin Roche and I serve as the General Manager of Ecomaine, a quasi-municipal organization with more than 70 member communities in Maine. Our member communities own and operate Maine's largest recycling facility, a food waste recovery program, a Waste-to-Energy plant and a landfill. Perhaps what's most notable and unique about our organization is our community outreach & educational programs that are second to none. That said, perhaps it's our mission statement that best describes Ecomaine:

Ecomaine provides comprehensive long term solid waste solutions in a safe, environmentally responsible, economically sound manner and is a leader in raising public awareness of sustainable waste management strategies.

The recovery of recyclables from the waste stream is critical in diverting these valuable materials from filling up our valuable landfill space in the State of Maine. While our average recycling rates of 25% - 35% in many of our communities demonstrates strong participation in our programs, most communities can still do better than that. For those communities that have lower recycling rates (as low as 4%), there remains significant room for improvement.

We know that most residents very much want to recycle, however not everyone has access to convenient recycling programs. To get maximum participation in recycling, programs must be as convenient to utilize as throwing away their trash. There is a cost to run these programs and why should municipal governments and their taxpayers shoulder all these costs associated with the disposal and recycling of packaging materials that are being created by the producers?

Following the passage of the EPR legislation, the Ecomaine member communities decided to invest in new recycling technologies that will more efficiently and effectively sort and separate recyclable materials and at the same time, produce a cleaner grade of recyclables for market. This investment alone totals over 30 million dollars. Producer responsibility is long overdue and municipalities across the State of Maine need relief in supporting their recycling programs. We've seen many municipalities abandon or limit their recycling programs due to cost. It's time for producers to step up without delay.

I thought it would be appropriate to provide an example of how EPR will make a difference. We have some communities that offer convenient curbside trash collection, but recycling requires the residents to drive their recyclables to a drop-off station. The primary reason for this is the added cost of providing an effective recycling program that's as convenient as their trash collection. With EPR in place, recycling programs will be enhanced, participation will increase, recyclables will be recovered and less waste will fill up Maine landfills. With EPR, recycling rates will quickly jump from 5% all the way up to 35% or more with additional outreach.

In communities that already have good recycling participation, there's still plenty of opportunity to improve. With a focus on readily recyclable materials, producers will consider packaging alternatives that are more recyclable, thus moving packaging out of the trash bag and into the recycling bin.

In conclusion, EPR will provide new recycling opportunities to put packaging back to use and at the same time, slow the rate of landfills filling up in Maine. We ask you to oppose LD 1423 and not delay the support that municipalities need to sustain and improve recycling in their communities.