

*Matt Dundas Testimony in Favor of L.D. 1928, An Act to Prohibit Lodging Establishments from Providing Single-use Plastic Containers*

Madame Co-Chairs, esteemed members of the committee, it's a privilege to be here today.

My name is Matt Dundas. I live in Cumberland, I'm a campaign director with Oceana, and I'm here to testify in support of L.D. 1928. Oceana is the world's largest non-governmental organization that focuses exclusively on ocean conservation. We work in several countries and U.S. states on a mission to protect and restore the world's oceans. We have thousands of members across more than 300 towns in Maine.

Plastic pollution represents a primary threat to ocean health. Plastic is now everywhere. It's in the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the blood pumping through our veins. Many plastics, such as hotel toiletries, are used briefly and then discarded, yet are easily replaced by refillable alternatives. We must reduce the production of unnecessary plastics that are used only once.

Although Maine has enacted some strong plastic reduction laws, New York, Illinois, Washington State, and California have already passed laws to eliminate small hotel toiletry containers. It's time for Maine to catch up.

L.D. 1928 will eliminate single-use plastic for hotel toiletries, such as lotion, soap, and conditioner, in quantities smaller than six ounces. Requiring multi-use hotel toiletry bottles is a big step toward reducing plastic waste, as it can reduce the amount of plastic used by more than 50% without impacting the experience of the user. Some estimates suggest the reduction in plastic could be over 90%, as users often barely use any of the product, but the bottle must be discarded anyway. In addition, this can be a money-saver for businesses in the long run, which explains why so many of the big chains – including Marriott, Hilton, and Hyatt – have already made the switch. Given that this can both reduce plastic waste and save businesses money, this is a clear win-win for Maine.

This bill includes a phase-in period to allow businesses to make necessary adjustments over time. Unfortunately, this period is excessively long. Oceana would like to see the phase-in reduced to what was passed in other states. New York, California, and Washington gave establishments with 50 or more rooms four years, and smaller establishments an additional year, to implement the law. In comparison, this bill gives business five and seven year phase-in period. For more perspective, Illinois gave 50 or more-room establishments less than one year and smaller ones less than two years. Four and five years is plenty of time.

Maine's reliance on tourism and seafood, and our national brand as a natural and scenic "Vacationland," should compel us to remain at the forefront of sustainable practices, especially when it comes to tourism.

As we learn more about the growing threat of plastic pollution, bills like this one are essential steps to reduce unnecessary single-use plastics from our society. I urge you to consider the consequences, amend the bill to reduce the phase-in period to four and five years, and vote "ought to pass."

Thank you very much.