

Testimony of Ashley Luszczi
Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
L.D. 2141, An Act to Direct a Portion of Unclaimed Beverage Container Deposits to the
Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund and the Maine Working Farmland
Access and Protection Program
February 4, 2026

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Ashley Luszczi, and I am testifying on behalf of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, the state's largest business association. The Chamber supports innovation, economic competitiveness, and a predictable regulatory environment that allows businesses to thrive. With those principles in mind, we are opposing L.D. 2141 because of the regulatory and fundamental shift in how unclaimed deposits would be used.

Supporting lake water quality and Maine farms is commendable; I want to be clear that our concern is not the underlying funding goals identified in this legislation. The Chamber's concern with L.D. 2141 is rooted in the significant change it presents.

Title 38, §3108 clearly expresses that unclaimed deposits generated through Maine's beverage container redemption program "are the property of the cooperative and ... must be deposited and maintained by the cooperative" for program-related expenses and reinvestment. More specifically, they can be used for annual fees to the Department, administrative costs, educational materials, reimbursement to dealers and redemption centers, and infrastructure.

Program costs, including handling and transportation, for the redemption program are substantial and continue to rise. We feel strongly that unclaimed deposits should continue to support the program by offsetting system costs and strengthening Maine's recycling infrastructure. Redirecting these funds would reduce the pool available to maintain and improve the bottle redemption program, undermining prior negotiations and making a significant change in statute.

We feel strongly that predictability within Maine's regulatory framework is critical. For the reasons stated, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce respectfully urges you to protect unclaimed deposits for their intended statutory purposes and maintain the integrity of Maine's beverage container redemption program. Please oppose L.D. 2141, both as drafted and as amended on January 29.