

Lakes Environmental Association

Protecting Maine's lakes since 1970

February 4rd, 2026

Re: Support for LD 2141: "An Act to Direct a Portion of Unclaimed Beverage Container Deposits to the Lake Water Quality Restoration and Protection Fund, the Maine Working Farmland Access and Protection, and Public Defender Office Staffing"

Dear Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and the Distinguished Members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

My name is Emlyn Emerock, and I am testifying in support of LD 2141. I work for Lakes Environmental Association in Bridgton and serve on the Lake Protection Coalition steering committee.

Our organization supports allocating funding from unredeemed bottle deposits to lakes and farms. Maine's beverage container redemption program was established in the 1970's to develop a conservation ethic. It is about limiting waste and the negative impacts we have on the natural world. In our work, we directly observe and mitigate the impacts of human activity on lakes and ponds. Compared to the rest of New England, Maine is lucky. For the most part, our lakes are still clean and clear. However, non-point source pollution is one of the biggest risks to lakes. Each year, more Maine lakes experience algal blooms caused by phosphorus loading and warmer temperatures. As our shorelines and watersheds become more developed, there are fewer trees and vegetation to protect lakes from erosion and stormwater runoff.

At Lakes Environmental Association, we have provided hundreds of site visits with landowners to identify sources of erosion and runoff on shoreline properties. We inspect gravel roads, work to replace undersized culverts and stream crossings, assess septic systems, and implement stormwater improvement projects. These upgrades benefit lakes, landowners, and the community by reducing maintenance needs and decreasing the risk of washouts and road closures. Plus, our lakes are the water supply for hundreds of thousands of people living in Maine.

However, implementing best management practices can be expensive. And with more severe weather events, growing development pressure, and uncertainty around federal 319 funding, we need more dollars to support clean lakes.



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In addition to providing technical assistance to community members, I teach environmental education and watershed science in our school districts. Last year, for Earth Day, I taught recycling to over 150 sixth-grade students. After a brief lesson, they were able to articulate how recycling is connected to clean lakes and a healthy environment for all.

We need to know that our unredeemed bottle deposits are going back to the people of Maine. And, we have a right to know how much funding comes from unredeemed bottles each year and how those dollars are currently being spent. Are beverage companies utilizing these funds to support recycling and protection of Maine's environment? If so, what are these programs, and how much money goes to them?

Nonprofits like ours are working hard to both protect lakes and teach the next generation to recycle and be good stewards, but we can't do it without consistent, reliable funding and support.

I urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 2141. Thank you for your time.



Emlyn Emerock
Lakes Environmental Association

