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Rep. Billy Bob Faulkingham
Testimony In Support of
LD 108 An Act To Improve Public Safety by Repealing the Single-use Plastic Carry-out Bag Ban
Environmental and Natural Resources
February 22, 2021

Good morning Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

I am Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham and I am here to present LD 108 **An Act To Improve Public Safety by Repealing the Single-use Plastic Carry-out Bag Ban**

AUGUSTA, December 22, 2020 - A statewide ban on single-use plastic carry-out bags had been scheduled to go into effect January 15, 2021 and the polystyrene foam disposable food service container ban had been scheduled to go into effect January 1, 2021 however, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is delaying its enforcement of the laws that ban the use of these products until July 1, 2021.

The Department is taking this approach in response to several practical and logistical effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The COVID-19 worldwide pandemic has disrupted traditional food marketing and packaging supplies. Demand for groceries, "curbside pickup," and takeout food has increased, while the demand for paper bags and thicker reusable plastic bags has also increased resulting in substantially less supply of both 4 mil reusable plastic bags and paper bags - the substitutes allowed for single-use plastic carry-out bags under the bag law. Additionally, due to concerns over possible virus transmission, many retailers have asked customers not to bring reusable bags from home, moving consumers back to store-supplied single-use bags.

-This above statement is from David Madore, Communications Director of the Maine DEP

The unfortunate truth of the matter is that no one knows when this pandemic will end, or when the next pandemic will come. It would be dangerous and irresponsible to ban plastic grocery bags with what we know now.

The plastic bag ban was well intended, but thankfully it had not gone into effect when it's dangerous and deadly consequences were realized. Thankfully Governor Mills took immediate action to halt the implementation of this potential deadly law.

Maine has a growing population of Somali immigrants, Congolese asylum seekers, and other new Mainers of color. These communities are generally not affluent and sometimes arrive here with just the clothes on their backs. We need to remember that not everyone has the disposable income to purchase reusable bags for the sole purpose of grocery shopping, when some of them don't know how they are paying for their next meal. Let this be the first racial impact statement of the 130th Maine Legislature: Plastic bag bans are inherently racist. They unintentionally come from a place of white privilege. The law has prioritized conveniences taken for granted by affluent members of society and forgotten the poor, and homeless. Where does someone store their re-usable grocery bags, when they don't even know what homeless shelter they will be sleeping in that night? Let's not punish the poor, the homeless, and those seeking refuge in our state. Many of these Mainers of color don't own a car let alone a suburban or pickup truck capable of lugging many paper bags. How would they transport them? Please pass LD 108. Thank you.