

Ted Koffman
Bar Harbor

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. I am Ted Koffman, a Bar Harbor resident, and a former Legislator (2000-2008) and served as House Chair of the Environment and Natural Resources. I appreciate this opportunity to communicate my opposition to LD 39, LD 108, and LD 244.

Several years ago, Mount Desert Island municipalities, Bar Harbor, Mt.Desert, Southwest Harbor, and Tremont passed ordinances banning single use plastic shopping bags. It all started with a year-long 8th grade class project, with four young women, and a creative guiding teacher from Pemetic School, in Southwest Harbor.

Their research focused on impacts from plastic in the environment, particularly marine life that consumes toxic plastic particles, along with marine birds that feed pieces of plastic to their young. Apparently, marine mammals, sea turtles, and other animals also assume plastic pieces are too. Consequently, critters, stuffed with plastic, suffocate. The students learn that, over time, toxins accumulate in fish species as well, posing the risk of contaminated fish for the market.

Concerned about impacts to wildlife, risks to public health, and our vital coastal fishery economy, the students undertook the drafting an ordinance to ban plastic single use bags. They focused on current successful model ordinances across the State. Eventually, the students presented the draft ordinances before Town, Council, and Selectmen meetings.

All four municipalities enthusiastically adopted the ordinances, and implementation went smoothly with residents, local stores, and visitors. We won't forget the four energetic young women students. While single use plastic shopping bags is a small percentage of unnecessary plastic packages and products on shelves, so we have more work ahead.

Maybe today's students could become Legislator