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To the Committee of Environment and Natural Resources:

I strongly recommend that the committee stand against LD 108 – An Act To Improve Public Safety by Repealing the Single-use Plastic Carry-out Bag Ban.

My first argument stems from the exact argument I pitched against LD 39. LD 108 – An Act To Improve Public Safety by Repealing the Single-use Plastic Carry-out Bag Ban is written under the false premise that stores have no recycling receptacles for plastic bags already in place. Many stores do, and they make no difference.

Hannaford grocery store located in Elm Plaza in Waterville has had a bag recycling receptacle for years. Some people use it, many don't. What made the difference in the number of bags drifting around the Hannaford parking lot wasn't the recycling receptacle but the plastic bag ban that went into effect for the city in 2019.

The claim for the purpose of LD 108 is “to allow the use of single-use bags instead of reusable bags and prevent the spread of disease that may exist of reusable bags.” One assumes that this stems from the writers and supporters of LD 108 using the pandemic as an excuse to get rid of a progressive piece of legislature. As we know now, many viruses are aerosol and, if they are on a surface, can be cleaned with soap and water or disinfectants. Many who use reusable bags clean their bags regularly – some after every visit. For those not feeling safe using their reusable bags, there are still single-use paper bags that retail locations carry.

What can be done during a pandemic? Simply what the city of Waterville has already set precedent for: back in March of 2020, when the pandemic was just gearing up and no one knew what we were dealing with, the city of Waterville voted to suspend their bag ordinance until more was known.

LD 108 does nothing to help remove one of the most prevalent forms of plastic floating around our state. It simply prolongs the inevitable – moving our state towards a cleaner, planet- and animal-friendly future while using a temporary pandemic as a means of justification.