



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
From: Sarah Fitzpatrick, Sierra Club Maine
Date: April 23, 2021
Re: **Testimony in Support of L.D. 1467: An Act to Promote a Circular Economy through Increased Post-consumer Recycled Plastic Content in Plastic Beverage Containers**

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and Members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Sarah Fitzpatrick and I am a resident of North Yarmouth. I write today as a stay-at-home mom and volunteer with Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. We voice our support and urge you to vote “Ought to Pass” for this legislation: LD 1467 An Act to Promote a Circular Economy through Increased Post-consumer Recycled Plastic Content in Plastic Beverage Containers.

America’s current recycling system is broken and mismanaged. While other nations are recycling at rates exceeding 70% and 80%, the United States recycles [50% of its residential packaging and paper products and only 8% of plastics](#). Despite Maine’s successful bottle bill, its overall rate of recycling is far below average.

Maine is not responsible for the recycling industry’s failure, though it is also not faultless. Maine set a recycling rate goal of 50% in [1989](#) and it has yet to be reached 30 years later. This failure is inexcusable and requires significant statewide action. Maine sends an abundant amount of waste, unnecessarily, to the landfill or incinerator, [and it has increased](#) over the last six years. The [2019 state average](#) recycling rate hovered around 30%. This is not an unsolvable problem. We are capable of improving Maine’s domestic recycling infrastructure.

The [evidence](#) clearly demonstrates that incentivizing recycling increases the rate of community participation. A majority of Maine’s recycling incentives focus on consumer and government-funded public services. It is imperative, for the future of Maine’s economy and environment, that these incentives and responsibilities be extended beyond that, to include the manufacturers that produce these materials.

An Act to Promote a Circular Economy through Increased Post-consumer Recycled Plastic Content in Plastic Beverage Containers (LD 1467) would be an effective way at

addressing the problem of plastic. It is not unreasonable to hold these corporations accountable for their negative impact on the environment through their massive production of single-use plastic bottles.

There are over 30 states with successful Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs. As of July 2020, “80% of the 83 [statewide EPR laws](#)” targeted products containing toxic chemicals and electronics. Currently, zero US legislation focuses on the responsible recycling of plastics and packaging. Maine is one of ten states that have recently proposed EPR laws regarding plastics and packaging: LD 1541 is an Environmental Priorities Coalition priority bill, which also must be passed. There are five Canadian Provinces with EPR recycling programs for commonly used products.

Currently, over [20](#) large beverage manufacturers conducting business in Maine are simultaneously participating in Canada’s EPR recycling programs, including Poland Spring. They actively take responsibility for their Canadian plastic waste, and they can afford to do it here. LD 1467 simultaneously reduces the amount of waste sent to landfills and incinerators, and the loss of valuable resources by increasing the longevity of plastics used by beverage manufacturers.

Thank you Representative Doudera for presenting this legislation. We ask the Committee to vote ought-to-pass on LD 1467.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Fitzpatrick
Legislative Team Volunteer
Sierra Club Maine