

Michele Benoit
Bangor

Good morning,

My name is Michele Benoit, and I live and work in Bangor, Maine. I teach science at Bangor High School and advise the school's environmental group, SEED (Students Ending Environmental Destruction).

Our group has explored the plan for recycling reform in Maine as presented in this bill, and would like to offer our voices to support its passage. With their permission, I'd like to share concerns and possibilities from students.

One student, a junior here at Bangor High, looked at the potential of this bill to save taxpayers money. Another, a sophomore, hoped that resources could be redirected to additional recycling infrastructure in the city, including Bangor's waterfront. A third student shared a poignant experience that shows that individual action, while vital, only goes so far. Here are stories, in their own words.

"Recycling is very important to me because not only do I feel bad for the sea creatures (because of all the plastics in the ocean), but I also feel bad for the people in downtown Bangor that get all kinds of trash on the ground--[on the sidewalks and along the waterfront]. so with this being said, I really hope you would consider supporting this recycling reform bill. Perhaps the money saved could add more recycling bins downtown." --C.M., 11th grader

"I'm a big fan of recycling, not only in ways that involve me recycling, but in me supporting those who are recycling. I know of an ocean cleanup group known as 4Ocean. When I was just learning about them, the first things I bought were two bracelets. I made a promise to wear one of them every day. A little later and for completely different reasons, I went to a Boy Scout campout. I brought one of the bands with me. While I was there, we did some relay races through these forested areas, and for the whole day I was running across the snow doing tasks and answering questions. It was only afterwards that I learned I lost my 4Ocean band. I spent a long time searching for it, but in the snow and ice, I never found it. I was incredibly disappointed. Later, my mom asked me why I seemed so sad on the ride home. I told her it was because I lost my 4Ocean bracelet, to which she replied she could always buy more. I was not sad that I had lost my bracelet, but rather I was saddened by the thought that my 4Ocean band, made from plastic taken from the ocean and recycled into something new, had been lost in an area where it could potentially pollute, litter, and harm wildlife much like it had been doing when it was first found. It was a small bracelet, but I knew even then that even the little ones could do harm. The bracelet that had been crafted just for me, pulled out of the sea where it participated in the pollution of our planet's waters, was once again just a piece of litter. No matter how many new bands I buy, I still know that that one is out there, and unless someone finds it, and reuses it once again, pulling it free from the loop of junk to jewelry, there it will remain, and who knows what harm it might do there. I need recycling to correct my mistakes, and everyone's mistakes, like my accident with the bracelet. It is the only way to repair what we have done, and even if this Recycling Reform idea affects only a small area, in a small state, in just one country, on just one continent, in one vast world, I know that just like the bracelet, even the small things matter." --H.S., 10th grade

Thank you for the chance to share student voices. Their concern and compassion for the environment is genuine. Please help support their vision for the future by passing recycling reform in Maine.