



**Testimony of Maine Public Health Association in Support of
LD 1541: An Act To Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer Money**

Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Room 216, Cross State Office Building
Monday, May 10, 2021

Good morning Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Rebecca Boulos. I am a resident of South Portland and executive director of Maine Public Health Association. MPHA supports LD 1541: “An Act To Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer Money.”

MPHA is the state’s oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health professionals. We represent more than 500 individual members and 30 organizations across the state. The mission of MPHA is to improve and sustain the health and well-being of all people in Maine through health promotion, disease prevention, and the advancement of health equity. As a statewide nonprofit association, we advocate, act, and advise on critical public health challenges, aiming to improve the policies, systems, and environments that underlie health inequities – but which also have potential to improve health outcomes for all people in Maine. We are not tied to a national agenda, which means we are responsive to the needs of Maine’s communities and we take that responsibility seriously.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs are a policy approach under which producers are given a significant responsibility – financial and/or physical – for the treatment or disposal of post-consumer products.¹ EPR encourages product design changes that minimize negative impacts on human and environmental health. This bill extends Maine EPR law to include packaging. Under the program, producers of packaging pay into a fund based on the amount by weight of packaging material they sell, offer for sale, or distribute for sale in the state. Producer payments are used to reimburse municipalities for incurred recycling and waste management costs. Recycling-related reimbursements to municipalities are based on the median recycling costs incurred by similarly situated municipalities, while disposal-related reimbursements are based on per capita disposal costs.

Packaging (e.g., plastic, cardboard, glass, and metal) comprises 30-40% of the materials managed by Maine’s municipal waste management programs.² Since 1989, it has been Maine’s goal to reach a recycling rate of 50% of municipal solid waste generated; data show we are currently at 36.79%.³ Extending the law will help Maine finally reach this recycling goal; it would also remove as much carbon pollution as taking 166,000 cars off the road – inching Maine toward achieving another goal of cutting the state’s carbon pollution by 80% by 2050.

This legislation will reduce municipalities’ waste management burden, encourage better stewardship of packaging, and promote and protect environmental and human health. Therefore, we respectfully ask you to vote LD 1541 “Ought to Pass.” Thank you for your consideration.

¹Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2019. [Extended Producer Responsibility](#).

²Maine DEP. 2017. [Maine Solid Waste Generation and Disposal Capacity Report: Calendar Year 2015](#).

³Maine DEP. 2019. [Reduce, Reuse, Recycle](#).