

Dear Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Peggy Brown and I'm a retired middle school teacher living in Brunswick. This spring, a drive from Brunswick down I-295 to Portland provides a disheartening and depressing view of floating plastic - plastic in the medians and roadsides, plastic hanging from the trees, and plastic floating in the estuaries. It's never been this bad before. I'm ashamed and saddened to see it.

But it's no wonder. Everything comes wrapped in plastic now, sometimes in double layers: building materials, kayaks, arugula, shampoo, your morning coffee. For someone like me, who is trying to be a conscientious consumer, it's hard work to find sources for products that are not bound up in plastic. I don't need my produce in plastic boxes, but I have to plan ahead and go to specific places to find unwrapped fruits and vegetables. And they cost more. Most people don't have the time or the money.

Somehow the plastics industry seems to have convinced us that we need this stuff. This industry generates more than 300 million tons of plastic a year, about half of which is for single use items. The amount which is recycled? 8.7% (per National Geographic 2019). We just are not up to the task. Where does the rest of it go? Into landfills or burned in incinerators and into the atmosphere, or into our waterways. Plastic pollution is now considered one of the largest environmental threats facing humans and animals globally. Plastic doesn't really ever go away, it breaks down into tiny pieces and infiltrates the soil, water and air mentioned above and those little pieces have chemicals known for impacting the health of living things.

Maine needs to do something now to tackle this problem. LD1541 would provide resources to cities and towns to increase their ability to recycle plastic. It would incentivise companies to reduce wasteful packaging. Right now, the burden of cleaning up a mess caused by the plastic industry is borne by taxpayers. Let's make the system fair: If you produce plastic packaging and make a profit from it, help to clean it up and keep Maine a beautiful and healthy place to live.

Please support LD1541 for Maine by reporting a Unanimous Ought to Pass report.

Thank you for this important work.