

Testimony in Support of LD 1541,
An Act To Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer
Money
and
in Opposition to LD 1471,
An Act To Establish a Stewardship Program for Packaging
Carole Cifrino, resident of Whitefield, Maine; May 10, 2021

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Carole Cifrino, and I live in Whitefield, Maine. I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of LD 1541, and in strong opposition to LD 1471.

Some of you know that I relatively recently retired from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection after more than 30 years of service to the people of Maine. I spent the last half of my career implementing and managing Maine's product stewardship programs. One of the highlights of my career was in 2003 and 2004 when I observed this Committee considering two bills that each proposed a new product stewardship program for electronic waste (e-waste). Like packaging today, e-waste had become a very pressing waste disposal problem posing an ever-increasing financial burden on municipalities and environmental burden on our state, our country, and the world.

Like these two bills before you, the e-waste stewardship bills considered by your predecessors presented starkly different models: one required a significant increase in the size of government with minimal support by manufacturers for the recycling of their products; the other provided for shared responsibility for end-of-life management and financial incentive for manufacturers to design their products to be more readily recyclable. In the end, the oversight committee and the Maine Senate, led by Senator Tom Sawyer, a Republican from Bangor and a very successful businessman who had retired from the waste management business, voted **unanimously** to support the latter bill. I then had the privilege of managing for Maine the first-in-the-nation electronics product stewardship program, which to date has resulted in the recycling and diversion from disposal of over 100 million pounds of e-waste.

It is disappointing that the producers who support LD 1471 have put forward a model aimed at minimizing their investment in the recycling of packaging, which includes no incentives to reduce that amount of packaging nor required incentives to increase recyclability of packaging. At its core, LD 1471 simply requires manufacturers to submit a plan to develop a plan by October of 2023 and a program plan by October of 2024, with

implementation more than 4 years from now. It allows producers to submit an unlimited number of plans, causing an unmanageable workload for DEP and an unmanageable recycling system for Maine's municipalities and residents. It also authorizes producers to set their own standards for recyclability and goals for recycling of a limited subset of consumer packaging, as well as reporting standards for municipalities, and to determine how much financial support they may provide when and where into Maine's recycling system. This would result in a classic fox-watching-the-henhouse situation, providing DEP with extremely limited oversight authority.

I very much want to thank Representative Grohoski for your leadership in sponsoring LD 1541, and Senators Carney, Brenner and Bennett, and Representatives Hanley and Ziegler for co-sponsoring this bill. LD 1541 is a bill crafted by people who know and understand Maine's waste management system and its challenges. By supporting LD 1541, you will set Maine on a path to significantly increase the recycling of waste materials while providing market incentives to reduce the amount of waste generated, and to level the playing field for manufacturers who are already doing the right thing by designing their packaging using only minimal amounts of materials that are readily recyclable.

Based on my 15 years of experience managing product stewardship programs for the State, I strongly urge you to support LD 1541 and to reject LD 1471. By doing so, you will have a significant and lasting impact on improving recycling, supporting Maine's municipalities and waste management businesses, and decreasing environmental degradation caused by the production and improper disposal of packaging. Thank you for your attention, and I will be happy to answer any questions.