



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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May 10, 2021

Testimony of Rep. Lydia Crafts

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

In support of LD 1541, An Act To Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer Money

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Lydia Crafts and I represent House District 90: the Lincoln County communities of Bremen, Bristol, Damariscotta, Newcastle, part of Nobleboro, part of South Bristol and Monhegan Plantation. I'm pleased to testify in support of **LD 1541, An Act To Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer Money.**

I know this committee has spent many hours wrestling with the difficulties municipalities have faced with their recycling programs. With the collapse of the recycling market in recent years, towns have gone from being able to bring in revenue from recyclables to having to pay to get rid of them.

This has put local governments in a bind as they balance preserving residents' good recycling habits and the positive impact on the planet with higher regressive property taxes.

But beyond just the fiscal issue are deeper issues with the overall waste stream. We see inconsistencies with recycling, with many things shipped to a landfill or an incinerator. Contaminated materials, once accepted by China, are unacceptable in our recycling infrastructure. Consumer behavior plays an important role in how we manage and modify our waste and education campaigns by municipalities and waste management companies can help improve outcomes, but education will only carry us so far.

We need to shrink the waste stream itself, and the responsibility for doing that can't fall only on consumers and local governments. The companies that produce our packaging - whether it's labeled recyclable or not - bear significant responsibility as well and should be required to be an active part of the solution.

Maine has already established successful stewardship programs, so we know this can work. Putting this framework in place now will lead to lasting improvements in the way we approach solid waste and recycling - improvements we will all benefit from.

LD 1541 is a responsible and essential part of recycling reform. In passing it, you would be signaling to municipalities that they are not alone in this effort and that the state is actively working to help Maine communities increase recycling and shrink their waste streams.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer questions from the committee.

Sincerely,

Lydia Crafts
State Representative

District 90 Bremen, Bristol, Damariscotta, Newcastle, Nobleboro (part) South Bristol (part) and Monhegan Plantation, plus the unorganized territory of Louds Island