



Testimony in Support of LD 1541, An Act to Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer Money

Anya Fetcher, Environment Maine State Director, May 10, 2021

Sen. Brenner, Rep. Tucker, and members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Anya Fetcher and I'm the state director of Environment Maine, a statewide member-based environmental advocacy organization, representing thousands of Mainers, working for clean air, clean water and open space. Environment Maine supports LD 1541 because we believe it will bring some much needed improvements to Maine's recycling system.

Our interest in this bill is rooted in our interest in seeing producers being held accountable for the waste they are creating, especially single-use plastics. Globally, 33 billion pounds of plastic enter the marine environment every year, devastating the world's oceans. Plastic does not go away, instead it breaks into smaller pieces that can be mistaken for food by marine life. Plastics have been found everywhere we've looked; from the deepest trenches of the ocean to the rain in the Rocky Mountains. Maine is not immune to these impacts. Researchers have found that lobster larvae get microplastic fibers trapped under their shells and sometimes ingest particles,¹ and the average Maine oyster contains 177 plastic particles per animal.² Plastic pollution is not exclusively a coastal problem. It's estimated that 94% of tap water samples in the US contain plastic particles,³ and plastic pollution is abundant in our ponds, lakes, rivers, and streams.

For years, Environment Maine and many other organizations and individuals have been working to reduce plastic pollution in Maine, which is an urgent and growing problem for our oceans, wildlife and our communities.

A big reason why plastic pollution is on the rise is because producers are absolved of all responsibility for where their products end up, leaving you and me with limited choices when buying consumer goods and then footing the bill for managing the waste. That fundamentally has to change.

Producer responsibility policies are being developed and considered in several other states across the country, and our report "[Break the Waste Cycle](#)" details how producer responsibility policies can benefit consumers and the environment.

Most importantly, effective producer responsibility programs can play an important role in moving Maine toward a circular, zero-waste economy. This bill will help us achieve our zero waste goals by holding

¹ <https://bangordailynews.com/2020/07/13/news/hancock/microplastics-are-harming-the-gulf-of-maines-baby-lobster-study-finds/>

² <https://www.shawinstitute.org/focus/plastics-and-microplastics>

³ https://orbmedia.org/stories/Invisibles_plastics/

producers accountable for the waste they create and ensuring that they bear partial responsibility for the cost so our governments don't have to foot the bill with taxpayer dollars and public health

If your bathtub is overflowing, you don't start by bailing out the water -- you start by turning off the tap. We need to turn off the plastic tap, or the problem of plastic pollution in our environment and in our communities will only get worse.

We urge the committee to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1541.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.

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