

May 10, 2021

Good Morning Chair Brenner, Chair Tucker, and Distinguished Members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

The Surfrider Foundation Maine Chapter submits this testimony in **strong opposition to LD359**, an act to promote energy production from recyclable plastics.<sup>1</sup>

Waste-to-energy projects focusing on burning plastics are a false solution to our plastic pollution problem and clean energy needs. Incinerators emit more carbon dioxide per unit of electricity (2988 lbs/MWh) than coal-fired power plants (2249 lbs/MWh).<sup>2</sup>

Incineration of plastic creates significant greenhouse gases, suffered disproportionately around the world by communities of color and low-income communities,<sup>3</sup> while plastic left to degrade in the environment over thousands of years continues to release greenhouse gases. **The only solution to plastic pollution is to stop making so much plastic in the first place.**

In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change<sup>4</sup> concluded that we must cut global greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030, and we must reach zero net emissions no later than 2050. Yet plastic production is on the rise. Petrochemicals are 99% derived from fossil fuel feedstocks, constituting the fastest-growing form of oil consumption globally.<sup>5</sup> Industry forecasts predict that they will account for 50% of the demand for oil by 2050. The time to act to curb this is now.

Because plastics have known negative effects on marine ecosystems, human health and our climate, the stark increase in manufacturing of plastics is pushing vast amounts of greenhouse gases into our atmosphere. Coupled with the potential interference of microplastics with the biological carbon pump by way of reducing the ability of phytoplankton to handle carbon through photosynthesis and reducing the ability of zooplankton to transport carbon by degrading its

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=HP0257&item=1&snum=130>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. EPA, <http://www.epa.gov/cleanenergy/energy-and-you/affect/air-emissions.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.wastedive.com/news/majority-of-us-incinerators-located-in-marginalized-communities-report-r/555375/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15\\_spm\\_final.pdf](https://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_spm_final.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ciel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Fueling-Plastics-Fossils-Plastics-Petrochemical-Feedstocks.pdf>

ability to feed, reproduce and survive, it is clear that to properly address climate change, plastic expansion must be curbed.

LD359 would hinder our ability to advance toward a clean energy future and would further perpetuate and maintain plastic pollution by enabling plastics producers to continue churning out products that cannot be refilled or reused. Why continue to enable wasteful industry production that poisons our land, air, waters, bodies and planet with toxic plastics rather than demand a shift away from plastic production?

The burden should not be the State's to find a use for discarded plastic waste; the burden should be on the producers to stop making wasteful plastic products. Fortunately, LD1541<sup>6</sup> is legislation also before this Committee today to hold producers accountable for their packaging waste and plastic pollution reduction; the Surfrider Foundation supports the real solutions presented in LD1541.

On behalf of the Surfrider Foundation, our Maine Chapter, and our thousands of supporters who love the ocean, waves, and beaches, I urge you to please **vote ought not to pass on LD359**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Melissa E. Gates  
Pronouns: she/her/hers<sup>7</sup>  
Northeast Regional Manager  
Surfrider Foundation

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=HP1146&item=1&snum=130>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cultureamp.com/blog/sharing-gender-pronouns-at-work>

*The Surfrider Foundation is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the ocean, Waves, and beaches for all people through a powerful activist network.*

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