

Testimony of
Ben Gilman for
The Maine State Chamber of Commerce
In opposition to
L.D. 1471, An Act To Establish a Stewardship Program for Packaging
And
L.D. 1541, An Act To Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer
Money

May 10, 2021

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Ben Gilman, I am from Gorham and I represent the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, a statewide business organization made up of both large and small businesses, here to provide you with our testimony in opposition to **L.D. 1471**, L.D., An Act To Establish a Stewardship Program for Packaging and **L.D. 1541**, An Act To Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer Money.

The Maine State Chamber of Commerce has served on both the Governor's 10-year economic strategy committee and the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Committee. Both documents contemplated strategies to grow our economy before and after the pandemic. Similar legislation to LD 1541 was proposed in New York, was studied and found that such a new government infrastructure and the associated costs of packaging fees would increase the average grocery bill from 4-6%. As Maine businesses and families begin the road to recovery post-pandemic, that is substantial increase in costs. We all recognize that recycling and solid waste are significant issues at the municipal level but embarking on such new program at this time is not the right direction as we began to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

LD 1541 contemplates setting up a new government entity that imposes packaging fees on all products at the manufacturing level that will then establish a whole new waste system for the State of Maine. No other state has attempted this, there is a proposal being considered in New York, but that proposal has stalled at the moment. As a state we need to have this discussion, but the current solution proposed in LD 1471 and 1541 are not right for a state trying to rebuild their economy post pandemic. Speaking as a Maine resident, with 4 kids, ages 6, 9, 12 and 16, our grocery bill is our largest expense besides our mortgage. I am sure that is similar to other Maine families and a 4-6% increase on our largest monthly expense will have a direct impact on our family. I can only imagine what that may be like for those in a lower income bracket.

The Maine State Chamber of Commerce is not opposed to looking at regulations or making changes to our solid waste policy, but timing and cost do matter. The timing and cost of both LD 1471 and 1541 are not right for the State of Maine as we look to our economic recovery.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with our testimony.