



Maine Municipal Association

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

Neither For Nor Against

LD 359 – An Act To Promote Energy Production from Recyclable Plastics

May 10, 2021

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Neal Goldberg, and I am providing testimony neither for nor against LD 359 on behalf of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee.

Recyclable plastic waste is ending up in landfills because of the state's insufficient infrastructure for recyclable materials and lack of a robust recycled products market. The Association supports the concept draft's insinuation that the state needs to promote using recyclable plastics for waste-to-energy over landfill, until a profitable market for such material exists. Imbedded in this support is the expectation that recycling and recycled products market, not waste-to-energy production, remains the state's top priorities. Efforts to lower the standards of recycled products or to forever promote waste-to-energy over recycling are not advised.

The amendment put forth by the bill's sponsor in testimony does not appear to align with the Association's expectation for this concept draft. Instead of promoting waste-to-energy as a means of last resort, only ahead of landfilling, the legislation as amended elevates waste-to-energy as a tolerable form of recycling when by most standards incinerating plastic waste is not considered recycling.

Changing the definition of recycling is only one way to meet the state's recycling goals. In the past, the state has been able to motivate certain recycling behaviors with fee schedules that deter landfilling, stewardship programs like the bottle tax, or increased information and education at transfer stations and community recycling centers. Beyond these traditional motivators, the concept of extended producer responsibility is gaining momentum as a solution to the waste problem. In Maine, extended producer responsibility for packaging materials is already being considered to reduce the amount of waste that is landfilled by 40% and funnel most of this material into recycling streams. These fees, taxes, and stewardship for recyclable products are more in line with the Association's recycling goals than lowering the standards for what constitutes recycling.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this very important matter.