

**TESTIMONY OF VICTOR HORTON
MAINE RESOURCE RECOVERY ASSOCIATION**

**LD 1541 – An Act to Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save
Taxpayer Money**

**Joint Standing Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources
May 10, 2021**

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Victor Horton and I am the Executive of Maine Resource Recovery Association (MRRA). I have personally worked with Cities and Towns regarding recycling and solid waste for 24 years. I am presenting this testimony on behalf of the board of directors of Maine Resource Recovery Association (MRRA).

The MRRA was formed in 1984 with solid waste and recycling issues in mind. We are a non-profit entity with a mission to foster professional solid waste management practices that will benefit Maine communities. Our members number just over 160 cities and towns including 60 transfer stations and recycling centers. MRRA markets recyclables, provides transportation, administers revenue sharing among the towns, and performs other solid waste and recycling services including an annual backyard composter sale and a two-day Solid Waste and Recycling Conference. This year scheduled at the Samoset Resort on October 18-19, 2021.

It is a privilege to submit testimony to the ENR Committee regarding LD 1541.

We are neither for nor against this bill.

It should be telling that more and more industrialized countries have been adopting similar bills over the last 30 years.

As you are all aware, recycling is currently in crisis across the country.

It is only a matter of a couple of decades ago that Maine had competitive markets within this state, for most if not all the paper grades recovered from the waste stream. Last year we lost our last processor of residential newspaper, Huhtamaki, of Waterville. They moved the newspaper processing to Hammond, Indiana. There are a few mills owned by ND Paper in Old Town and Rumford that may be beneficial to the residents of Maine regarding recycling, but time will tell.

Most viable markets are further away. We ship raw recycled paper to other New England States and as far away as Canada and India. The plastics go as far away as Alabama and with freight prices skyrocketing, a lot of the revenue that we would get for the material goes towards freight costs.

The result is significantly lower revenue returning to Maine towns which is making it more difficult to financially support recycling efforts. Many municipalities have discontinued their recycling programs and cut back on what they once collected.

A product stewardship law in the State of Maine should help to reinstate a level of predictability for costs and assure the included materials can be recovered and re-used in an environmentally sound fashion.

It would hopefully result in more thoughtful packaging choices by the industry, based on recoverability rather than, very simply, on unit cost per package.

A thoughtful approach in formulating this stewardship plan would also include consideration of unintended consequences.

For example, light-weighting packages has saved manufacturers and their customers significant cost, but in our solid waste system, greater public costs are incurred resulting from labor having to deal with the significantly increased volume while reimbursement is based strictly on weight based sales of recovered materials.

It is with these issues in mind that the MRRA favors Extended Producer Responsibility put forth in bills such as LD 1541.

We respectfully offer our comments in the hopes that a sound EPR bill will benefit the State of Maine.

We generally support legislation that promotes less waste and more recycling of our precious resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor Horton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Victor" and last name "Horton" clearly distinguishable.

Victor Horton
Executive Director