

Bill Lippincott
Hampden

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, Distinguished Members of the Committee, I'm Bill Lippincott; I'm writing in behalf of Don't Waste ME in support of LD 1541: An Act To Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer Money. I'm the Chair of Don't Waste ME, a coalition of people across Maine advocating for responsible policies that protect the health of communities most at risk from negative impacts of landfill, incinerator, leachate and sludge disposal operations. I live in Hampden, location of the closed, leaking Pine Tree Landfill and the shuttered Fiberight plant.

LD 1541 is urgently needed to help Maine communities struggling with rising costs of an ever-growing flood of wasteful packaging materials. There is increasing confusion about what can be recycled, and dozens of Maine towns have already been forced to cut back or cancel their recycling programs. Furthermore, Maine's landfills are filling up fast. We need to divert as much tonnage as possible away from Maine's landfills in order to preserve capacity. Improving recycling programs statewide will help us achieve that goal.

The recent shake-up in global recycling markets has exposed the fundamental flaws in how we manage recycling in Maine. Market downturns for some commodities, like paper and plastic, have led to an unprecedented rise in the cost of recycling. And new materials are being sold into the market with no local recycling option.

When comparing high recycling costs to the low cost of disposal, many communities are left feeling like they have no choice but to abandon or cut back on their recycling programs—which is why the recycling rate is falling. That's why we need LD 1541. Recycling programs should not be paid for by taxpayers and municipalities who have no say in what materials they are stuck managing and paying for. Most of what is in our recycling bins is packaging. Packaging, which includes plastic, steel, aluminum, glass, and cardboard, constitutes approximately 30% to 40% of the materials managed by weight in waste management programs in Maine. The companies that manufacture that packaging should be partly responsible for where it ends up. Maine already has product stewardship programs for paint, mercury containing lightbulbs and thermostats, e-waste, and rechargeable batteries. We need a similar solution for product packaging.

Our organization has looked at this bill, and at LD 1471, and we believe LD 1541 has far more benefits for Maine's towns and taxpayers. LD 1541 already has a structure set up so that DEP can successfully administer the program; we believe this bill will more effectively reduce waste than LD 1471.

We need to make sure that Maine isn't a dumping ground for waste produced beyond our borders. This bill puts the burden on the producers who are creating the waste and gives Maine the tools it needs to finally start reducing waste in our state. We urge you to pass LD 1541.

Bill Lippincott , Chair, Don't Waste ME
Hampden