



Testimony of Executive Director, Ben Lucas

Testimony in OPPOSITION to LD 1541: “An Act To Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer Money”

May 10th, 2021

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Ben Lucas, I live in Portland, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Maine Jobs Council. The Maine Jobs Council is a new, statewide, nonpartisan, member-driven advocacy organization that advances public policies to support the creation and preservation of foundational jobs in Maine. I am here today to testify in opposition to LD 1541.

If passed, this legislation will make Maine an even greater outlier with the rest of New England and the country. Among American states, Maine ranks [#46 for business environment](#) and [#37 for economic strength](#). Both of which are the lowest in the region. Some of the reasons for this, we have the [6th highest energy cost](#), the [4th highest healthcare cost](#), the [4th highest tax burden](#), and [our weekly wage is \\$966](#), tied with Wyoming for 11th lowest. This legislation would increase the overall burdens and costs in Maine, by increasing our price for products between 4-6%. This increase in costs will impact Maine families and foundational jobs because they are the ones who will feel the burden of increasing prices for goods and services.

This legislation would raise operating costs even higher, put us at a greater disadvantage, and make Maine even less likely to attract jobs, investment, and innovation. The Office of Fiscal and Program Review says Maine’s income is projected to increase by \$462-million this year and \$460-million next year, far better than the projections when COVID started. There is a record amount of money coming into Maine from the federal government, with around \$500 million going to municipalities. We feel this could be a better way to cover the cost of recycling. Adding more regulations and burdens on employers at a time when most are already struggling will not help Maine's economy.

Over the next 5 years, Maine's retiring workforce will leave [158,000 open jobs](#). In order for our state's economy and tax base to grow, we should be passing legislation that fits into Governor Mills 10 Year Economic Plan to add 75,000 people to Maine's talent pool. This legislation would not do that. Increased costs make it harder for employers to compete and the focus of the legislature should be advocating for economic prosperity by promoting the growth and maintenance of foundational jobs. If Maine companies cannot compete, if money isn't invested here, if jobs stagnate or leave, then we'll have more and more people who are not working.

In closing, We encourage this committee to start taking a more comprehensive look at how increased costs, regulations, infrastructure, workforce challenges, and other issues act as a barrier to job creation in our state. Maine needs to develop and follow a long term strategic plan that makes us more competitive and keeps jobs in Maine. We urge this committee to vote ONTP.

Thank you.

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