



To: Maine Legislature Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
From: Charles Spanger, Member, 350 Maine
Date: May 18, 2021
Re: LD 1541 - An Act To Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer Money OUGHT TO PASS

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Charles Spanger and I live in Scarborough where I am a member of the Scarborough Conservation Commission. I am writing on behalf of 350 Maine in favor of LD1541, "An Act to Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayers money". We oppose LD1471 which is too weak and is an effort by big corporations to replace LD1571 with a very low impact plan.

LD1571 will put Maine on the front line with several Canadian provinces and numerous countries that have already achieved excellent outcomes from enactment, including the doubling of their recycling volume. There are eleven other states currently debating such a bill, and Maine could be the first in the nation to implement the "Extended Producer Responsibility" (EPR) concept for packaging.

Maine currently recycles only 36% of our waste. Packaging represents 40% of that waste and growing. Maine taxpayers pay seventeen million dollars per year to dispose of this packaging. This bill makes polluters pay by making the companies responsible for these increasing costs, giving them serious incentive to package better with less. Five hundred companies that do business in Maine currently participate in such a program in Canadian provinces and elsewhere, so enactment here would put no new burden on them.

EPR will seriously reduce the amount of plastics in our waste stream, an absolute necessity. Now there is more volume of plastic in our oceans than there are fish. This is worse than unsustainable.

EPR works by reducing waste and increasing recycling through incentivising more thoughtful packaging. The program administrators will collect fees from producers and assist them in doing better. Small businesses will be exempted.

EPR is systemic change. It internalizes recovery costs and towns (taxpayers) get relief. It targets package design and makes participation easier. Canadian recycling rates have indeed doubled. It will dramatically improve essential data collection on our waste stream. Premium payments will pay for better statewide recycling infrastructure. In Canada there has been negligible impact on product costs. Federally the complementary "Break Free from Plastics Act" that includes a bottle bill has been introduced.

The benefits are obvious and huge for everyone. Recycling will begin to make sense and be truly effective. Please vote it out of committee "Ought to pass."

Thank you.
for 350 Maine,
Charles Spanger
Scarborough
207-232-3135

PO Box 4736 Portland, Maine 04112
350maine.org

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