

**Testimony in Support of LD 1541,  
An Act To Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer  
Money**

*Linda Woods, Waterville  
May 3, 2021*

I am writing in support of LD 1541 because I am concerned that municipalities will cease their recycling programs due to cost. Every year when property tax bills are issued, I hear people complaining about how costly their taxes are. Yet, these funds are essential to cover the cost of municipal services. One of the most costly services is trash/recycling pick up, transportation, and disposal. Maine's taxpayers pay \$16-\$17.5 million per year to manage packaging waste either through recycling or disposal.

Packaging makes up nearly 40% of our waste stream, and much of it isn't designed with recycling in mind. While I could share many examples, I use my package of gum as an example. Certainly I am grateful that each individual piece of gum is protected in a foil wrapper. However, the wasteful packaging associated with this stick of gum is distressing. The sticks are contained in a boxboard box (which can be recycled) and surrounded by film (which cannot be recycled). Surrounding this already thoroughly wrapped piece of gum is a cellophane wrapper (which cannot be recycled). Such unnecessary packaging is thrown away. BTW: Where is away? It is wherever the municipality hauls its trash. The act of hauling is increasingly expensive due to this ever-growing flood of wasteful packaging.

If you vote to pass, LD 1541, An Act To Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer Money, Maine towns and cities, like Waterville, could be reimbursed for the cost of operating their municipal recycling program. That's why the Waterville City Council and 24 other Maine municipalities endorsed the policy earlier this year. Maine has already adopted eight other successful EPR programs over the past 20 years to recycle used electronic waste, old paint, and mercury thermostats. Adding this would be a continuation of a program proven to work.

Such a cost-reducing program is possible. In fact, it already exists in dozens of countries around the world and five Canadian provinces. Additionally, five hundred brand owners that do business in Maine already participate in a similar Canadian recycling program. Hundreds of brands like Amazon, Best Buy, Kimberly Clark, Hasbro, Home Depot, McDonald's, Mattel, Nabisco, Samsung, Tyson, Unilever, and Wal-Mart are already participating in Extended Producer-Responsibility for Packaging Programs elsewhere. If those companies can afford to do it elsewhere, they can do it in Maine as well.

Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging creates an incentive for corporations to help make recycling simpler by improving the design and recyclability of their packaging. It will also give municipalities the financial support they need to keep and expand recycling programs—no more having to choose between raising taxes or cutting recycling. As someone who has been

trained to teach residents the basic of recycling, I am hopeful that some of this saving can be used to better educate people about recycling. This, too, will decrease the amount going to the landfill, which is important.

Please help local municipalities improve recycling options and save taxpayers money by voting to support LD # 1541. Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,  
Linda Woods  
Waterville