

I would like to start by saying that even though we are against both LD1541 and LD1471 as presently written we at Renys agree with the overall goal of reducing waste. Basically, I have questions related to how this will affect retail. These questions are based on assumptions, which I admit, may be wrong, but I have yet to get answers to these questions to date.

First, it is unclear as to how we track the different types of recyclable materials and if the responsibility to do so should fall on the retailer. We have 50,000 active sku's at Renys with 100's, if not more, of different types or combinations of packaging. For instance, a Carhartt shirt can have stickers on it, come in a plastic bag with tissue paper or cardboard, have a cardboard or paper hang tag attached by a tiny plastic hanger. Even as a consumer, it is hard to keep track of all the different types of recyclable materials and what is and what isn't recyclable. For a retailer to track and manage all of this will most definitely be an additional cost that will make us less competitive with the larger corporations.

Even if we are able to figure all this out, who is responsible for collecting the money from the company producing the packaging, is it us? We have thousands of vendors we work with, big and small, and this would put us in an awkward position, and at a disadvantage compared to retailers around the country. It puts certain programs that these vendors offer us such as discounts, marketing dollars, or even access to the products our customers want us to provide. My grandfather always said that our business is successful based upon our relationships. If you pay your bills on time and treat them fairly, which for some reason makes them like doing business with you, you will be the first one they call.

And if they refuse to pay, what then, is it us who has to pay? We don't have the same bargaining power with these vendors as other large corporations have. We don't have the market share to demand that they pay or else. At that point, I believe the cost or tax from this bill will be shifted to local Maine businesses. You will find, if that happens, we will be unable to continue to grow, to provide more good paying jobs for our communities, and to provide a service to our customers, and a choice for them to support a local Maine business that is part of and gives back to the community.

We started to ban plastic bags a couple years before it was passed, raise our wages well ahead of the minimum wage, paid our employees before we even secured a ppp loan during the shutdown, we pay all our taxes while other international corporations do not. We do all that and more because we feel it is the right thing to do. I would assume that many local businesses feel the same as we do, that we continue to do the right thing, but it continues to get harder for us to survive.

Do we all need to change to combat climate change, to produce less waste? Yes, but the total cost should not be disproportionately on local Maine businesses.