



May 3, 2023

Senator Brenner, Chair
Representative Gramlich, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Maine Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

RE: Testimony in Support of LD 1418 – An Act Concerning Single-Use Disposable Water Bottles and Water Refill Stations.

Dear Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and Members of the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on LD 1418, An Act Concerning Single-Use Disposable Water Bottles and Water Refill Stations. **Just Zero supports this bill.**

Just Zero is a national environmental non-profit advocacy organization that works alongside communities, policy makers, scientists, educators, organizers, and others to implement just and equitable solutions to climate-damaging and toxic production, consumption, and waste disposal practices. We believe that all people deserve Zero Waste solutions with zero climate-damaging emissions and zero toxic exposures.

Bottled water is a multi-billion-dollar industry that is largely unnecessary and entirely wasteful.¹ Companies have found a way to take something that is necessary for survival, widely available, and virtually free, and turn it into an expensive commodity. Worse, the overwhelming majority of these companies package and sell water in toxic and wasteful single-use plastic.

LD 1418 will help address the environmental and societal costs associated with bottled water by primarily requiring the State to lead by example. The bill prohibits establishments in state buildings from selling or providing bottled water. Instead, guests at state facilities or events will have access to free, reusable water bottle refill stations. This is an easy and simple way to eliminate unnecessary waste while fostering a more sustainable and environmentally conscious culture.

¹ The Story of Stuff Project, [The Story of Bottled Water](#). (March 22, 2010).



Additionally, LD 1418 will level the playing field by ensuring that anywhere bottled water is sold, consumers have the option of refilling their own bottles instead. An option that is largely not available right now.

The lack of refill stations and the prevalence of single-use bottled water is not a response to any intrinsic benefits associated with bottled water. Instead, it is the result of a sophisticated and misleading marketing campaign. In response to declining sales, beverage companies began packaging and selling water as a healthier alternative to soda and other sugary beverages. The problem was that the overwhelming majority American's had access to clean, affordable, and abundant drinking water and we're unlikely to begin paying for bottled water.

To address this, companies created a demand for bottled water by undermining the cleanliness of tap water. They did this despite the fact that most bottled water is just packaged tap water.² To the extent that these companies are packaging non-tap water, there is no evidence that bottled water is cleaner or safer than tap water.³ This isn't surprising given that bottled water is not regulated as strictly as tap water. In fact, companies are not required to disclose the source of bottled water, the treatment processes used to filter the water (if any), or the results of any contamination reports.⁴

Unfortunately, this marketing campaign succeeded. Americans drink more bottled water than any other packaged beverage.⁵ In 2021, Americans drank 15.7 billion gallons of bottled water.⁶ According to the United Nations, the rapid growth of the bottled water industry has not only fostered distrust in tap water but has also disrupted investments in long-term public water supply infrastructure developments and improvement.⁷ The report found that where bottled water is popular, government's spend less on public water supply developments.⁸ As a result, when bottled water becomes popular, access to reliable public water sources, like refilling stations, stalls or dwindles.⁹

In addition to the impacts to public drinking water infrastructure, rising bottled water consumption also threatens the environment at every stage of its lifecycle. The

² David Lazarus, [In Most Cases Bottled Water is Just Tap Water](#), LA Times (Sept. 28, 2021).

³ Natural Resources Defense Council, [The Truth About Tap](#). (Jan. 05, 2016).

⁴ Dr. Sanaz Majd, [Should You Drink Tap or Bottled Water](#), Scientific America (Oct. 21, 2015).

⁵ International Bottled Water Association, [Bottled Water Consumption Shift – U.S. Consumption by Beverage Type 2010 – 2020](#).

⁶ Russell Redman, [Bottled Water Sets All-Time Volume Record](#), Supermarket News. (Jun. 03, 2022)

⁷ United Nations University Institute for Water, [Environment and Health, Global Bottled Water Industry: A Review of Impacts and Trends](#). (2023).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*



industry produced 600 billion plastic bottles in 2021, 85% of which are likely to end up in landfills.¹⁰ According to a report from the Ocean Conservancy, single-use plastic bottles are the third largest source of plastic pollution in our oceans.¹¹

Even in jurisdictions like Maine that have strong Bottle Bill programs, plastic water bottles can only be recycled 2-3 times before needing to be landfilled or incinerated.¹² As a result, a significant amount of plastic is manufactured, simply to sell water. In the U.S. alone, 17 million barrels of oil are needed to produce the plastic necessary to meet annual bottled water demand.¹³ Additional resources are needed to extract, transport, and collect these bottles. Raising the climate impact of this unnecessary industry. In fact, research suggests that the environmental impact of bottled water is 3,500 times greater than tap water.¹⁴

LD 1418 provides the ideal starting point to address the harm that results from bottled water production and consumption. This bill will provide increased public access to water refill stations, thereby limiting the need to purchase bottled water in the first place. Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony. Just Zero strongly supports this measure and encourages you to recommend that the bill ought to pass.

Respectfully submitted,

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Policy Director
Just Zero

¹⁰ Gloria Dickie, [Rising Bottled Water Consumption Signals Safe Drinking Water Goal is Under Threat, Says U.N. Think Tank](#), Reuters. (Mar. 16, 2023).

¹¹ The Ocean Conservancy, [Building a Clean Swell](#). (2018).

¹² National Geographic, [Seven Things You Didn't Know About Plastic and Recycling](#). (April 4, 2018).

¹³ Joey Grostern, [Environmental Impact of Bottled Water Up to 3,500 Times Greater Than Tap Water](#), The Guardian. (Aug. 05, 2021)

¹⁴ *Id.*