



Learning
Disabilities
Association
of Maine

Testimony in Support of LD 295:

“An Act to Ensure Accurate Recyclability Labeling
for Plastic Containers and Plastic Packaging Material”

January 24, 2024

Dear Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Tracy Gregoire and I am the Healthy Children Project Coordinator for the Learning Disabilities Association of Maine.

The Learning Disabilities Association of Maine (LDA-ME) is a statewide, non-profit organization of individuals with specific learning disabilities and attention disabilities, and the families and the professionals who support them. LDA-ME provides education and support to families of children with learning disabilities and adults with learning disabilities.

One in 5 American children have a learning or attention disabilityⁱ. The autism rate continues to rise now affecting 1 in 36 children, which has tripled since 2000ⁱⁱ. Approximately 17.8% of children in the United States have a developmental disabilityⁱⁱⁱ.

The etiology of learning and developmental disabilities may include one or more of a complex variety of factors, including genetics, substance abuse, social environment and environmental exposure to toxic chemicals. According to the National Academy of Sciences Committee on Developmental Toxicology, **environmental factors, including toxic chemicals, cause about 3 percent of all developmental defects, and contribute to another 25 percent**^{iv}. This means that 360,000 U.S. children (1 in every 200 children) suffer from developmental or neurological deficits caused by exposure to known toxic substances^v.

In order to protect children’s brain health, we need to look at the whole life cycle of a product, including all of the chemicals in plastic and what plastic breaks down into.

During the manufacturing of plastics, there is leaching of chemicals into the packaging and which may be linked to health impacts. LDA focuses on chemicals that harm brain health and plastics can contain heavy metals, phthalates and other chemicals linked to learning, attention and developmental disabilities.

Plastic packaging accounts for the majority of plastic production. **This bill would ensure that plastic packaging being recycled will not contain intentionally added metals (some of which are well-known neurotoxins like lead with no safe level of exposure) or chemicals of concern** identified by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

Following the lead of a California law passed last year, LD 295 would prohibit manufacturers from labeling items as recyclable if they cannot actually be recycled. We feel this is common sense and should be made policy. One of many positive results of this bill will be the better protection of children's brain health.

Sincerely,

Tracy Gregoire
Healthy Children Project Coordinator
Learning Disabilities Association of Maine

ⁱ [National Center for Learning Disabilities](#), 2015-2016 statistics.

ⁱⁱ [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#), prevalence of autism, 2023.

ⁱⁱⁱ [Center for Disease Control](#), children aged 3-17 years with a developmental disability, 2015-2017.

^{iv} [Scientific Frontiers in Developmental Toxicology and Risk Assessment](#), Executive Summary, National Academy of Sciences Committee on Developmental Toxicology, 2000.

^v [Polluting Our Future: Chemical Pollution in the U.S. that Affects Child Development and Learning](#)", National Environmental Trust, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and Learning Disabilities Association of America, September 2000.

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LD 295

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