



# SIERRA CLUB

## MAINE CHAPTER

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**To:** Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

**From:** Ania Wright, Legislative and Political Specialist, Sierra Club Maine Chapter

**Date:** January 24, 2024

**Re:** Testimony in Support of LD 295: "An Act to Ensure Accurate Recyclability Labeling for Plastic Containers and Plastic Packaging Material"

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Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, and members of the Marine Resources Committee,

I am submitting the following testimony on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nationwide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy. We urge the Committee to vote "ought to pass" on LD. 295.

Maine consumers, including our members and supporters, care about recycling. However, much of our plastic packaging is labeled as recyclable when it actually isn't. Due to inaccurate labeling, consumers are putting plastic packaging into recycling bins that cannot actually be recycled. This misinformation and confusion to customers seriously harms our ability to collectively work towards a livable planet and sustainable future.

This bill will define recyclability not only as something that could possibly be recycled, but as something that is actively recycled in the state of Maine. The chasing-arrows symbol will only be allowed if the material is already actively recycled in the state at least 75% of the time. It should be noted that this is needed on top of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) law, which helps to limit plastic packaging, but does not include guidelines on recyclability.

This is a national issue that Maine has the chance to take lead on. A 2020 NPR and PBS Frontline investigation<sup>1</sup> revealed that petrochemical and beverage industry executives have known since the 1970s that there was, and likely never will be, an economically viable way to recycle plastic 100 percent. Because plastic degrades each time it is recycled, it cannot be endlessly recycled into useful products, nor is plastic recycling economical. As a result, American consumers throw away more than 60 million plastic bottles every day, even if they think they are recycling.

In order to increase transparency and limit confusion to customers, we urge you to vote 'ought to pass' on LD 295. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.npr.org/2020/09/11/897692090/how-big-oil-misled-the-public-into-believing-plastic-would-be-recycled>

Sincerely,

Ania Wright  
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