



City of Portland, Maine

To: Senator Carson, Representative Tucker, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee

From: Troy Moon, Sustainability Coordinator

Date: April 5, 2019

Regarding: City of Portland, Maine testimony to the State of Maine 129th Legislature's JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES in support of L.D. 1431, "*Resolve, To Support Municipal Recycling Programs.*"

Senator Carson, Representative Tucker, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the City of Portland in support of L.D. 1431 "*Resolve, To Support Municipal Recycling Programs.*"

In Maine, responsibility for managing solid waste and recycling largely falls on local government. Towns and cities throughout the state spend significant portions of municipal budgets on collecting, transporting, process, and disposing of the material discarded by their residents. This includes everything from regular household trash, construction debris, and difficult to handle materials such as electronic waste. For many communities the solid waste budget is the largest line item in the budget after school expenditures.

While municipalities must pay the cost of disposing and recycling unwanted materials, they have little control over how manufacturers and distributors design and package the materials that eventually become part of the municipal waste stream. Consequently, the products people buy and eventually get rid of may not be easily recyclable, may be over packaged, and may contain materials that increase disposal costs. The State of Maine has recognized this problem and has enacted producer several responsibility laws that require the manufacturers of things like cell phones, mercury thermostats, electronic waste, fluorescent tubes, and paint to participate in the cost of recycling and disposing of these items. This incentivizes them to make the products easier to handle, to minimize the amount of hazardous material they contain, and to make them easily recyclable.

Countries around the world including Canada and the European Union have extended producer responsibility laws to include packaging material such as boxes, wrapping, and other containers for consumer goods. LD 1431 would direct the DEP to bring forward a bill that would incorporate these materials into Maine's product stewardship framework.

Packaging materials make up the largest portion of the recyclable materials collected by municipalities around the state. As noted in the text of LD1431, the bill instructs the DEP to

create language that will require producers to pay 80% of the costs of recycling the packaging material sold in the state and to reimburse municipalities on a per capita basis for handling non-recyclable packaging. This would greatly benefit Maine communities already burdened by rising waste disposal and recycling costs. Most recycling processors now charge municipalities to accept their material where, in the past, recycling provided a revenue stream. On July 1, Portland and the other ecomaine owner communities will begin paying a \$35 per ton tipping fee for recyclable materials. Many communities around the state already pay much more than this. This fee, on top of costs to collect that material from residents, represents a large burden for local government that consumer goods producers should share.

Maine's existing product stewardship laws have demonstrated the merits of the concept of producer responsibility and it makes sense to extend it to packaging.