



Testimony in Opposition of LD 39, LD 108, and LD 244, Legislation to Repeal Maine's Ban on Single-use Plastic Bags

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Corliss Davis. I live in Belfast and I am the co-chair of the climate change issue group of the Maine Unitarian-Universalist State Advocacy Network. MUUSAN has over 650 members and represents 22 UU churches across Maine.

As a Unitarian-Universalist, I know well that my faith teaches me to respect the “interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” The Shaw Institute in Blue Hill has stated: “It is estimated that eight million metric tons of plastic now pollute the world’s oceans. Over time, most of this plastic breaks down into tiny pieces less than 5 millimeters in length, which are consumed by marine wildlife and contaminate the food we eat.” (<https://www.shawinstitute.org/focus/plastics-and-microplastics>) What a tragic example of our interdependence with the world around us. What is our responsibility here?

Plastic shopping bags have only been in use since 1977 and in our home we have long used only reusable bags for all of our shopping. As of January 1, 2018, my city of Belfast banned single-use plastic bags, making us one of 17 Maine towns to ban them. When LD 1532 became law in 2019, the bans that were already working effectively in those 17 towns were expanded to include the rest of the state. LD1532 was also supported by the Maine Grocers and Food Producers Association and the Retail Association of Maine.

I continue to be proud of my town when I shop at local stores and see customers happily putting their purchases into reusable bags. I was greatly relieved late last year when unfounded fears about COVID transmission via reusable grocery bags were debunked and we could once again bring our cloth and heavy plastic bags from home into our Hannaford.

I can only guess that the 2021 opponents of single-use plastic bag bans are making one last effort to return Maine to the past instead of letting us lead towards a better future. Could it also be that the fossil fuel industry, facing a decline in demand for their products as we battle climate change, is turning to another fossil fuel product – plastic – to enhance their bottom line? An article from the New York Times on August 20, 2020 stated:

“Confronting a climate crisis that threatens the fossil fuel industry, oil companies are racing to make more plastic. But they face two problems: Many markets are already awash with plastic, and few countries are willing to be dumping grounds for the world’s plastic waste.” 8/30/2020
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/30/climate/oil-kenya-africa-plastics-trade.html>

On behalf of the Maine Unitarian-Universalist State Advocacy Network, I urge you to vote “ought not to pass” on LD 39, LD 108, and LD 244. There is no reason to return to the past when we can make progress towards a better future for us all.

Corliss C. Davis
5 Park St., Belfast ME 04915