



## Strengthening Plastic Recycling and Reducing Litter

### Support: LD 102

### *An Act to Improve the Manufacturing of Plastic Bottles and Bottle Caps*

**Sponsored by:**

Rep. Vicki Doudera of Camden

**Co-sponsored by:**

Sen. Miramant of Knox, Rep. Beebe-Center of Rockland, Rep. Pierce of Falmouth, Rep. Rykerson of Kittery, and Rep. Stover of Boothbay

**The European Union has identified this approach as a priority in its efforts to tackle plastic pollution. Maine has an opportunity to lead the U.S. on this smarter approach to plastic drink containers.**

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**This law would protect the environment from unnecessary plastic pollution by requiring plastic caps be attached to drink containers. It will also reinforce the market for recycled plastic by requiring a minimum amount of recycled content in each plastic beverage container sold in Maine.**

- Plastic caps from beverage containers are one of the most common types of beach litter – and a danger to marine life and the environment.
- More than 20 million bottle caps have been found during beach cleanups in the last 30 years, most of which come from consumer food and drink packaging. Approximately one million single-use bottles are used around the world every minute. Each one of them has a bottle cap.
- Bottle caps are harder than most plastics and degrade very slowly in the environment, making them a significant and pervasive portion of the annual 1.4 billion tons of plastic dumped into our oceans.
- Bottle caps are buoyant and small, causing seabirds and other marine wildlife to mistake the caps for food. They are particularly dangerous for albatross, who feed by skimming low across the water where they accidentally collect floating plastic debris in their beaks. A recent study found that 97.5% of Laysan Albatross chicks had plastic in their stomachs, leading to starvation in many.
- Bottle caps should remain attached to their respective bottles to prevent jamming recycling equipment—we should work smarter, not harder.

**A minimum recycled content requirement for drink containers would spark investments in recycling infrastructure, and promote innovation and creativity in the design of new containers.**

- China's recent decision to close its doors to foreign recyclables, including scrap plastic, upended global markets for recycled plastic. Market changes combined with low fossil fuel prices in the U.S. and E.U. have turned manufacturers of plastic products away from recycled material to virgin plastic.

- Most beverage containers are made from #1 PET plastic, yet only 12-14% of all PET on the market is made from recycled material. A Greenpeace report found that major bottling companies only use 6.6% recycled PET in their bottles, which leaves a lot of room for improvement.

- In 2018, Nestlé pledged to use 25-50% recycled PET in packaging sold in the E.U., and Unilever announced a 25% commitment to recycled content in packaging worldwide the year before. While a first step, voluntary commitments for recycled content from bottling companies are not enough to stabilize the scrap material market and incentivize investment in recycling infrastructure.



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