



## Testimony in Support of

### **LD 1065, An Act Regarding the Reduction and Recycling of Food Waste**

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Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Vanessa Berry. I am the Sustainable Maine Program Manager for the Natural Resources Council of Maine. I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of LD 1065.

Reducing the volume of food waste that ends up in the waste stream has been identified as a high priority across the country, with multiple states adopting laws similar to what is proposed in LD 1065. Reducing food waste can save money for municipal waste disposal, reducing the weight and volume of waste that is transported and reducing the need for landfill expansions. Strategies to reduce food waste can also help reduce food insecurity by increasing donations of edible food to those in need.

Food waste contributes to greenhouse gas emissions by decomposing in landfills and releasing methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Burning food waste makes incineration of other types of waste less efficient. Maine's Climate Action Plan identified the reduction of food waste as a key strategy to meet our climate goals, yet we remain the only New England state without a policy addressing food recovery.

While Maine has made good progress identifying food waste sources and solutions, voluntary efforts alone will not eliminate the problem. In 2011, UMaine's Waste Characterization Study reported that wasted food made up more than 27% of the total municipal solid waste in Maine, and 14 years later we have new data that suggests that packaged and unpackaged food still makes up about 19% of the municipal solid waste stream. According to a Maine report on food loss and waste generation that was conducted last year, food manufacturers, grocery stores, and restaurants generate 27% of Maine's food waste. These high-volume producers are ideal candidates for recovery efforts.

This bill establishes a clear and reasonable framework. It requires food waste diversion only when generators are within a set distance of processing infrastructure, with exemptions for financial hardship. Maine currently has the capacity to process 84,000 tons of food waste

annually—enough to serve the businesses targeted by this bill. Food waste recovery organizations would be encouraged to expand in areas with high potential for diversion.

LD 1065 builds on previous bipartisan support and offers a practical, scalable approach. It promotes food donation, supports farms and composting, and ensures that valuable food resources aren't wasted.

Thank you for considering this important legislation. I'm happy to answer any questions.