

**Testimony in Support LD 474,
An Act to Establish a Stewardship Program for Primary and Rechargeable Batteries**

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Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and distinguished members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Vanessa Berry, and I am the Sustainable Maine Program Manager for the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM). I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of LD 474.

LD 474 would expand Maine's product stewardship program for batteries to include primary and small-to-medium format rechargeable consumer batteries, requiring producers to participate in a statewide take-back program. The bill also would include batteries that are embedded in products after 2030, giving the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and producers time to find solutions for managing those batteries or implementing alternative design solutions.

According to DEP's recently released Waste Characterization Study, at least 820,000 pounds of batteries are discarded each year in Maine.¹ This is a significant problem because discarded batteries in the waste stream can pose risks to essential infrastructure and worker safety. LD 474 helps address these risks by expanding the responsibility of battery producers to help provide end-of-life recovery and management of problematic wastes, which has been the fundamental goal of Maine's many successful product stewardship programs.

Importantly, Maine already has an established framework for determining when product stewardship is warranted. In its past three Product Stewardship Reports, DEP has highlighted batteries as a possible candidate for additional EPR. Under the established framework, a product is well-suited for stewardship when:

- The product category contains toxics that pose a risk to people or the environment;
- A program would increase materials recovery;
- A program would reduce costs to local governments and taxpayers;
- There are demonstrated successful programs for the product in other jurisdictions; and
- Any existing voluntary management programs are insufficient.²

Primary and rechargeable consumer batteries clearly meet each of these criteria and warrant their own product stewardship program, funded by producers of batteries. They contain hazardous materials, are demonstrably entering the waste stream in large numbers, create avoidable costs for municipalities, and are already successfully managed through producer-funded programs elsewhere.

¹ Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Maine Statewide Waste Characterization Study, January 2026

² Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Annual Product Stewardship Report, January 2026

Producers Are Best Suited for Management of Batteries

Safe and responsible management of batteries is a problem here in Maine. Without adequate infrastructure for recycling of all types of consumer batteries, they find their way into our municipal solid waste infrastructure. When punctured or damaged, batteries can pose a fire risk, jeopardizing human health and safety and compromising the equipment and buildings that help Maine manage its waste. To this point, ecomaine's facility in Portland has experienced more than 60 fires in the last 3 years, with more than three-quarters of those fires confirmed to be caused by consumer batteries. Facilities risk losing insurance coverage, damaging expensive equipment, and endangering workers all because products they did not design are entering their tipping hall floors without safe end-of-life solutions.

An expanded product stewardship program for batteries also provides an opportunity to recover and reuse precious finite materials, keeping them out of landfills and reducing the need for virgin materials when making new batteries.

Improving Public Education and Recycling Access

Like many of Maine's other EPR programs, LD 474 proposes convenience standards that would help ensure that consumers have access to collection sites near where they work, shop, and throw things away. Convenience standards make proper recycling the easiest choice, which is essential for capturing small, easily discarded products like batteries.

Maine's current battery stewardship program only covers rechargeable batteries, which is a small fraction of the batteries that we use and discard. By expanding coverage to include a broad range of everyday consumer batteries, public education and participation will be much easier and more successful.

Comprehensive Battery Product Stewardship Has Been Implemented in Other States

California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Nebraska, Vermont, Washington, and Washington, D.C., have all passed legislation requiring producers to establish a stewardship program for primary and rechargeable batteries consistent with the language in this bill. This growing alignment across states also reduces compliance complexity for producers operating nationally.

Conclusion

Maine has an opportunity this session to close a clear gap in our existing stewardship program. To ensure fairness, protect waste infrastructure, and recover valuable materials, all battery producers should be required to participate in a comprehensive program. LD 474 represents a practical, proven, and fair solution to a growing problem. NRCM respectfully urges the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 474. Thank you for your time and consideration.