

10 March 2009

Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 536,
An Act to Enhance Maine's Electronic Waste Recycling Law
submitted to the Joint Standing Committee on Natural Resources by
Michael Belliveau, Executive Director, Environmental Health Strategy Center

Senator Goodall, Representative Duchesne and Members of the Committee, thank you for considering support for LD 536 from the Environmental Health Strategy Center, a statewide environmental public health organization that promotes human health, safer chemicals and a sustainable economy (www.preventharm.org).

LD 536 will divert toxic materials away from landfills & incinerators

LD 536 would expand the scope of Maine's electronic waste collection and recycling law by adding computer printers and video game controllers (Sec. 3.). Ultimately any electronic device containing a printed circuit board should be collected for recycling. Printed circuit boards contain both valuable recyclable metals (gold, etc.) and significant amounts of chemicals that threaten human health and wildlife, such as:

Lead – this neurotoxin leaches from the solder of circuit boards in landfills and is mobilized by incineration. Low level exposure can impair mental development.

TBBPA – this brominated flame retardant known as tetrabromobisphenol A (TBBPA) can harm thyroid function and fetal development, and produce highly toxic dioxins and furans when incinerated.¹

Amend LD 536 to set a target goal for e-waste collection & recycling

The bill as proposed would repeal the existing requirement that electronics manufacturers submit a recycling plan (Sec. 7.), which would among other things eliminate the “descriptions of the performance measures that would be used and reported by the manufacturer to report recovery and recycling rates ...” [see 38 MRSA §1610.6.A.(4)(g)]. To offset the weakening effect of this proposed regulatory relief, LD 536 should be amended to strengthen the law by establishing a mandatory recycling goal. A numerical goal would ensure greater accountability and program effectiveness by enabling the state to measure collection and recycling of electronic waste against a target metric. For example, the European Union has proposed that electronics producers be required to annually collect 65% of the electronic waste generated (by weight, against a baseline of electronics sold in the previous two years) by the year 2016.² Maine law should establish a similar mandatory e-waste recycling goal.

Thank you for your consideration in both supporting and strengthening LD 536.

¹ Carrol C, “**High-Tech Trash**,” *National Geographic*, January 2008.

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/01/high-tech-trash/carroll-text/1>

² European Commission, **Proposal for a Revised Directive on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment**, December 2008. http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/weee/index_en.htm