March 20, 2024

Minnesota Senate
Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee

Re: Packaging Waste & Cost Reduction Act (SF3561)

Dear Chair Klein and Members of the Committee,

The Minnesota Zero Waste Coalition, on behalf of the organizations listed below, are writing in support of SF3561, the Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act.

Problematic and unnecessary packaging is filling our landfills, burning in our incinerators, and trashing our recycling system. This packaging adds unnecessary costs to our communities and pollutes our environment. We cannot afford business as usual in our state. The Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act holds producers responsible for these impacts and drives them towards much needed changes.

The bill takes the following key actions:

Prioritizes Waste Reduction: We cannot recycle and compost our way out of this packaging crisis, we must prioritize reduction. The bill requires producers to meet targets for source reduction, reuse, recycling and composting, and post-consumer recycled content. These targets are enforced by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

Drives Packaging Redesign: Packaging producers will be charged based on the amount and type of packaging used. The less packaging a company uses, the less they will pay. There are also financial incentives for companies to reduce unnecessary packaging and use nontoxic, reusable, recyclable and compostable materials.

Creates Equitable & Free Access to Recycling: Recycling is a growing financial burden for local governments and individual families. The program will provide free recycling for all Minnesotans, by requiring producers to reimburse local governments for the cost of these programs.

Supports Quality Jobs: The program ensures that priority for service provider contracts is given to Minnesota companies that provide good jobs, strong safety standards, and quality services. Additionally, investments in reuse and recycling infrastructure will create new jobs across our state. The MPCA estimates that fully investing in recycling will result in over 15,000 new jobs.

Strengthens Minnesota's Economy: Businesses are struggling to source the metal, paper, plastic, and glass needed to make new packaging and products. Meanwhile, each year Minnesota buries and burns over 1 million tons of recyclables worth an estimated 143 million dollars. By recycling more, we can create a reliable domestic supply of recycled metal, paper, plastic, and glass to make new products.

Packaging waste has increased while recycling in Minnesota has stagnated for over a decade. Our system is plagued by volatile commodity markets, increasing contamination rates due to non recyclable packaging, limited local government resources, inequities in services, and a patchwork system of programs. The components listed above help to support a path to zero waste. However, efforts to weaken this bill risk us simply shifting the costs of recycling without ushering in systemic improvements and community benefits.

We are happy to provide additional information and would welcome the opportunity speak more about these issues.

Sincerely,

Krystle D'Alencar
Member of the MN Zero Waste Coalition
Organizer, Minnesota Environmental Justice Table

Lucy Mullany
Member of the MN Zero Waste Coalition
Director of Policy & Advocacy, Eureka Recycling

Submitted on behalf of the following organizations:
Action for Climate Emergency
Alliance for the Great Lakes
Beyond Plastics Greater Mankato Area
Caring for Creation at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church
Climate Generation
Clean Water Action
Coalition for Plastic Reduction
Cooperative Energy Futures
CURE Minnesota
Eureka Recycling
Green Party of Minnesota
Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate
Just Food and Water Initiative
Minnesota Environmental Justice Table
Minnetonka Climate Initiative
Northfield Zero Waste Coalition
Recycling Electronics for Climate Action (RECA)
R.I.S.E Coalition
Recycling Electronics for Climate Action
Sierra Club Zero Waste Committee