



February 21, 2024

Re: SF 3561 (Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act)

Dear Chair Hawj and Members of the Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee:

I write as executive director of the Minnesota Newspaper Association (MNA), to express our concerns about SF 3561. MNA represents the more than 250 newspapers throughout the state, from the smallest to the largest, as well as magazines that will be impacted by this bill.

Imposing on newspapers and magazines the regulatory obligations and associated expense of compliance with the program created in SF 3561 would have a severely negative impact on them, even though newspapers and magazines are not principal contributors to the waste problem in Minnesota. Including them in the bill would yield minimal environmental benefits at a very high cost of compliance for Minnesota's newspapers. Unfortunately, Minnesota's newspapers were unaware this proposal was under development until the bill was introduced last week. Neither MNA nor our members have been part of any stakeholder discussions, despite so clearly being impacted by these regulations.

For more than 30 years, both newspapers and magazines have encouraged their readers to recycle. Newspapers are recycled at a rate of more than 64 percent, higher than any other product, and magazines have a similar success rate while recycling 100 percent of leftover retail product. Newspapers and magazines are environmentally friendly as well. Newspapers use soy-based non-toxic inks, so newsprint is fully compostable and biodegrades in a matter of months. Magazines use linseed-oil-based non-toxic inks and soluble adhesives that do not contaminate or disrupt the recycling process and are similarly 100 percent biodegradable within months. Both newspapers and magazines can be recycled multiple times before the fibers become too short and weak to be reused.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, newspapers comprise only 1.7 percent of municipal solid waste and magazines comprise 0.3 percent. Furthermore, the newspaper category also includes directories and other forms of printed paper, so the percentage of actual discarded newspapers is even lower.

It is also a fact that newspaper and magazine print volumes are declining, as their readers increasingly move to digital. Thus, there is likely to be diminished print demand and a reduced number of newspapers and magazines entering the waste stream system in the future.

It also bears noting that the function performed by newspapers is very different from that of most other products in the waste stream. Newspapers provide vital news and information to residents of the state, frequently addressing environmental issues. Given the current degree of disruption in the newspaper business and the stress on newspaper budgets, the kinds of additional expenses imposed by SF 3561 would literally deprive residents of news and information: newsroom budgets would be reduced, and in many cases home delivery of printed newspapers would be unsustainably expensive.

We appreciate your consideration of our concerns as you discuss this proposal.
Sincerely,

Lisa Hills
Executive Director, Minnesota Newspaper Association

CC: Senator Kelly Morrison