

April 10, 2024

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

On behalf of the Association of Plastics Recyclers, I am **submitting written testimony in support of SF3561, Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act (Morrison)**. This bill is one of our top priority policies across the U.S. because it is a proven, effective solution to increase plastics recycling and support domestic manufacturing.

[The Association of Plastic Recyclers \(APR\)](#) is a US-based non-profit and the only North American organization focused exclusively on improving the recycling of plastics. APR members are the entirety of the plastics recycling industry from design to collection to recovery to remanufacturing. Plastics recycling is what APR does every day. APR understands the challenges facing the industry and the solutions needed to scale recycling effectively as a key solution to reduce plastic pollution and waste and move toward a more sustainable, circular economy.

Under our policy and advocacy initiatives, the APR works with U.S. states and stakeholders to adopt and implement producer-funding recycling policies as a critical solution to improve plastics recycling. **This bill will increase recycling rates and reduce plastic waste; reduce greenhouse gas emissions; spur more sustainable packaging design; and achieve all these milestones through an industry-driven solution without government spending.**

SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE, RESULTING IN A STRONGER BILL

A significant amount of stakeholder feedback and bill revisions have been made since this bill was originally introduced to this committee in March. The result is a stronger proposal that integrates the concerns from the business community while maintaining the strong environmental outcomes. With these changes, the bill:

- Develops a range of outcomes for recycling, reuse, composting, waste reduction, and recycled content rates under the Needs Assessment, rather than setting the rates initially in statute. This allows for a more informed decision-making process that balances environmental objectives with costs.
- Identifies greater areas of input from producers on recycling targets, needs assessment, list of recyclable materials, and other key planning processes.

- Provides reasonable, targeted exemptions for medical devices and newspapers without sacrificing program performance or adding substantial burden to the registered producers.
- Adopts the preferred industry definition of producer to give full clarity on which company is responsible for compliance.
- Provides minimum performance standards for service providers on bale quality, residual rates, etc. that should drive improvements in recycling systems.

THIS REMAINS THE MOST VIABLE PATHWAY FOR MINNESOTA

There was robust stakeholder dialogue in developing this bill, as well as the extensive comments received in public testimony and in written comments over the past several months. At no point during this process have opponents of this bill presented a viable path forward to improve recycling rates, reduce costs to local governments, and reduce reliance on landfills and incinerators in Minnesota. Producer funded recycling remains the [only proven policy to provide sufficient, ongoing, and dedicated funding to increase recycling](#). By providing sustained, consistent, and adequate funding for recycling, Minnesota can improve the convenience of recycling, provide stronger and more regular education and outreach to improve participation in recycling, and drive investments in new collection programs, sorting infrastructure, and more regional markets to support a circular economy and reduce plastic waste.

MINNESOTA'S RECYCLING SYSTEM NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

All states will see improvements in recycling rates under EPR programs, even states like Minnesota that have relatively strong existing programs. Three of the four states that have already adopted EPR for packaging—Maine, Oregon, and California—are also some of the top recycling programs in the country. A 2024 national recycling report found [Minnesota only recycles 20% of its PET bottles and only 26% of its HDPE bottles](#), despite 100% of these bottles being recyclable. The state [buries or burns over 685 million tons of recyclable materials](#) each year from households. Improvements are needed and now is the time to transform the system through this bill.

This bill will drive needed investments in infrastructure and education to improve recycling in Minnesota without passing those costs along to local governments or consumers. Even maintaining Minnesota's current recycling system will require continual investment, and EPR for packaging is the most effective solution to shift the funding toward brand companies and off taxpayers and local governments' budgets.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES IN MINNESOTA

Recycling has many proven environmental benefits, but it is first and foremost a business. This bill will grow plastics recycling businesses in Minnesota and the upper Midwest instead of expanding landfills. It is a vote for green jobs and clean, circular economy.

This bill is also a huge business opportunity for the existing service providers in MN, not a threat. There is a large need for more services, new and renovated infrastructure, innovative collection and processing systems, and more to reach these goals. The existing recycling providers are in the best position to deliver these new and expanded services because they have the existing infrastructure, partnerships, and experience to best serve the state. There are several provisions in the language to build and improve upon the existing infrastructure and investments, while driving competition and higher performance standards.

PLASTICS RECYCLING PROTECTS OUR ENVIRONMENT

Plastics recycling has numerous environmental benefits and is a critical solution to reducing plastic pollution and waste. The use of recycled PET and HDPE plastics instead of virgin plastics reduces energy use by 75 to 88% and reduces GHG emissions by 70%. Recycling plastics also reduces air and water pollution compared to virgin production. Greater plastics recycling will move Minnesota closer to its climate goals. In addition, more recycling will result in millions of tons of materials kept out of landfills and incinerators, which will reduce the harm these facilities pose to the environment and local communities.

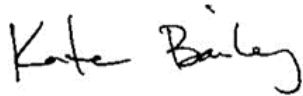
THIS POLICY IS BUILT UPON PROVEN SUCCESS WORLDWIDE

Today and every day of the year, in five provinces in Canada and over 20 European countries, more than 3,000 companies participate in EPR programs. Most of those companies are the same companies that sell the same products on our shelves in the US., companies such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi, Keurig and Kelloggs, Clorox and Colgate, and many, many others. **We know EPR policies work, and we know they are one of the most effective solutions to increase the amount of plastics collected for recycling and ensure more recycled materials are used in new plastic packaging.**

MOVING FORWARD

The bill is the right policy for Minnesota right now and is based on proven programs working in dozens of countries around the world each and every day. We will not succeed if we do not start moving forward, and the bill outlines a reasonable, phased approach to implementation with appropriate feedback and input along the way to develop the best program for Minnesota. Thank you for your vision, leadership, and commitment. APR staff are available at your convenience to discuss these comments. Please contact Kate Bailey, Chief Policy Officer, at katebailey@plasticsrecycling.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kate Bailey'.

Kate Bailey
Chief Policy Officer, Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR)