

Minnesota Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee
April 25, 2024

Senate File 3561 – “Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act”

Thank you Chair Hwaj and members of the Committee, for the record, my name is Dylan de Thomas, and I represent The Recycling Partnership. **We are in strong support of Senate File 3561.**

I lead state policy work for The Recycling Partnership, a national nonprofit that collaborates with communities, policymakers and more than 80 companies to invest in and strengthen public recycling programs across the country. We work with those companies – big brands and manufacturers of packaging materials of all types, glass, aluminum, plastic, and paper products – to “insist and assist” them to uphold their sustainability goals to serve people and the planet.

These goals include minimum recycled content levels, package recyclability goals and climate goals. The circular economy cannot be achieved by recycling alone, but it can’t be done *without* recycling.

We also know that systemic change cannot happen without smart, well-designed policy. We have identified that well-designed Extended Producer Responsibility policy that strengthens quality recycling is a critical ingredient to achieving a circular economy in Minnesota and beyond.

Our robust research shows that EPR policies such as this bill can deliver huge gains in recycling rates by bringing nearly universal access to recycling and supported by robust recycling education. Our modeling for Minnesota shows that we could see recycling rates of over 65% – returning hundreds of thousands of tons of recyclable materials to market, reinjecting over \$20 million in lost material value into the economy annually, creating hundreds of jobs across the state, and rescuing those materials from being buried in a landfill or burned in an incinerator.

Make no mistake, **all** materials need help in Minnesota; the residential recycling rate in this state is just 20%. Even cardboard is just 32% and mixed paper is 24%. PET bottles are just 20% and aluminum cans are just 21% - and all the rest of those materials are being lost to incinerators like the HERC and landfills across the state. A total of 785,000 tons of recyclable packaging from households in Minnesota is lost every year.

Some have mistakenly argued that EPR will increase costs for consumers and various analyses have hypothesized about these impacts. We have looked in every major market around the world where producer responsibility has been implemented and we have not found any credible evidence that compliance fees have affected consumer prices. Let me repeat that: With thoughtful, well-designed, strong EPR programs globally – outcomes show no credible evidence of a link between fees and how much consumers pay for products.

This solid bill, which was the result of a multi-year, broad and robust stakeholder engagement process, should be moved forward, where we hope to see it continue to address outstanding concerns and improve. We respectfully urge the committee to move this bill forward.

Sincerely,
Dylan de Thomas
VP of Public Policy & Government Affairs
The Recycling Partnership