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Testimony presented before the Minnesota House of Representatives Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection on 4/1/2025

Regarding: Testimony in Support of SF 1690 Stewardship program establishment for circuit boards, batteries, and electrical products

Senator Kline, Vice-Chair Seeberger, Members of the Committee,

I am writing to you in strong support of SF 1690, which presents a critical opportunity to protect both our environment and public health, ease the burden of electronic recycling for consumers, and save money by mitigating the costly damages associated with improperly disposed electronics and batteries.

Protecting Our Environment

SF 1690 would play a crucial role in safeguarding our environment by preventing the contamination caused by improperly disposed electronics. When electronics are sent to landfills, harmful chemicals and heavy metals such as lead, mercury, cadmium, and chromium leach into the soil and groundwater. These substances are linked to serious health problems, including developmental delays, increased cancer risks, and organ damage.

Furthermore, improperly discarded electronics and batteries have been the cause of fires in landfills and on recycling and garbage trucks. These fires not only harm the environment but also present significant health risks from the unfiltered burning of waste. In Minnesota, we have seen large, multi-day landfill fires, such as one earlier this year, likely triggered by improperly disposed-of batteries. Unfortunately, these fires are not rare—they occur frequently, exacerbating air pollution and creating respiratory, skin, eye, and internal health risks for nearby communities.

Expanding electronic waste recycling through SF 1690 would remove these harmful materials from places ill-equipped to handle them, significantly reducing the damage to our environment and public health.

Easing the Burden of Electronic Recycling

A significant barrier to recycling electronic waste is accessibility. Many individuals opt to discard their old electronics rather than recycle them because recycling options are limited or inconvenient. In Minnesota, it can cost around \$25 to recycle a microwave, a cost that may seem small but becomes more significant in times of financial uncertainty. This expense, combined with the lack of easily accessible drop-off locations, discourages many people from recycling their electronics.

Additionally, in some areas, municipalities only offer electronics recycling on a few specific days each year, and it is up to the consumer to track these dates. If residents miss these opportunities, they may have few other options for responsible disposal. While private businesses like Best Buy offer recycling services, not everyone lives nearby, and many are unaware of these programs or how to access them.

SF 1690 removes these barriers by making recycling services both financially and physically accessible to all Minnesotans.

Cost Savings

Currently, counties and municipalities bear the financial burden of improperly disposed electronics. This includes costs associated with mitigating environmental damage, addressing fires in landfills, repairing damaged recycling equipment, and the public health costs related to chemical exposure from polluted soil, water, and air.

Beyond these immediate costs, there is potential for Minnesota to generate revenue from recycling precious metals found in electronic waste. Materials like copper, silver, gold, palladium, tin, and nickel are essential for our transition to clean energy. These metals are needed for the production of wind turbines, solar panels, and batteries, all of which are key to a carbon-free future. By recycling electronic waste, Minnesota can reclaim these valuable resources while reducing the financial burden of managing the environmental impacts of improperly disposed electronics.

Conclusion

I urge you to vote in favor of SF 1690. It will help protect our environment and public health while offering significant financial benefits to the state of Minnesota. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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