



Testimony to the Joint Senate and Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee

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Memorandum of Support for Reduction, Reuse, and Recycling Initiatives in New York State

The New York State Association for Reduction Reuse and Recycling (NYSAR³) supports waste reduction and recycling and the professionals who make waste reduction, reuse and recycling happen. For more than two decades, NYSAR³— and its members from throughout every corner of the State in the public and private sectors — have played a leadership role in establishing and implementing environmental initiatives to reduce waste and increase recycling. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to the joint Environmental Conservation Committees.

A key part of NYSAR³'s role includes advancing legislation on the State level in the interest of promoting public and environmental health and creating a sustainable materials management economy of the future. For this I would also like to take a moment to thank this committee for the legislation that was passed in 2019. With your support, three very important waste reduction and recycling measures passed, including the plastic bag ban, paint stewardship legislation and food waste prevention and diversion, making 2019 a banner year for environmental legislation in NYS.

These pieces of legislation, plus the many others that are still in the works are a great start, but we still have a lot more work to do. **Recycling as we know it is in a crisis, it is not free.** Many New Yorkers have lost faith in recycling and are starting to believe it is not worth it. Communities are narrowing options of what is acceptable to put in the recycling container and some communities are considering stopping recycling all together.

The over-reliance on off-shore markets and now their closure is inflicting immediate and sustained financial harm to effective and critical recycling programs impacting communities from the Long Island Sound to the shores of Lake Erie. Merely maintaining existing funding levels for recycling and education is not enough for municipalities to ensure recycling continues during these abysmal market times. Why? Because these costs are so much higher than ever anticipated.

NYSAR³ implores you, the Joint Committees, to please make sustaining recycling in New York a top priority.



Increase Glass Recycling Through Expansion of the Returnable Container Act (Bottle Bill)

NYSAR³ urges the NY State Legislature to help local communities reduce costs and increase recycling by expanding the Bottle Bill to include more glass containers, such as wine and spirits.

There is widespread support in NYS public and private recycling sectors for an expansion of the Bottle Bill to include wine and spirits. This is because wine and spirit containers are almost exclusively (~98%) glass. This glass, estimated at over 100,000 tons of material annually, is not easily recycled through curbside programs but can be recovered for markets, and support local jobs, if kept clean through the bottle bill program.

Glass is highly abrasive and causes significant wear and tear on material recovery facility (MRF) sorting equipment. Glass can also negatively impact the value of other materials that are collected in the curbside mix, especially paper, that is collected together with glass in single stream recycling programs. The negative value, high processing cost, and contamination of other materials all make glass an expensive and undesirable material in residential recycling programs. That does not mean that we should stop recycling glass. It only means that we need to change how we collect it.

With increased glass being recycled through this expanded bottle bill, one way to create a circular economy in NY and to establish a sustainable market for the glass is to require all DOT projects to prioritize the use of recycled glass content when it is available and where it is appropriate like drainage areas, embankment and road base. NYSDOT should be directed to use this material wherever possible, creating a sustainable, long term outlet for glass while decreasing costs for the DOT.

Reduce Litter Through a Statewide Ban of Lightweight Single Use Plastic Products

As I mentioned earlier- the plastic bag ban across the state was a huge leap forward for carbon emission reduction and litter prevention. However, there are many other types of single use plastics that are prevalent in our society, such as straws and plastic drink stirrers. These items cause similar litter problems as plastic bags to wildlife and their environment. And as with plastic retail bags, there are simple, more sustainable options readily available which would make a ban of these products feasible.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for Packaging

Currently, producers of packaged goods, brand owners and importers, have little incentive to design packaging or printed paper to minimize waste, reduce toxicity, or maximize recyclability. This forces municipalities and private waste management companies to bear the cost of recycling these sometimes complex materials. Specifically, items and packaging that are not readily and cost-effectively recyclable like multi-material or composite packaging materials or hard to recycle plastic like resins 3, 4, 6 & 7, need an upstream solution that involves producers and consumers. A solution that stimulates more recyclable packaging by connecting manufacturers to the end of life management of these materials.

EPR is a form of industry-led recycling that creates jobs and economic development in direct proportion to the amount of material recycled, encourages infrastructure investment, and reduces government costs.



I urge this Joint Committee to consider the benefits of EPR legislation that will give producers the incentive to design products and packaging that are less toxic and easier to reuse and recycle by requiring such producers to help bear the costs for the proper recycling and responsible disposal for various products, packaging and printed paper.

In conclusion, we urge the New York State Legislature to make preserving and improving our state's municipal recycling programs a priority for 2020 by:

- 1) Expand the bottle bill to include additional glass beverage containers, including wine, spirits, and hard cider bottles, which comprise over 100,000 tons of material annually.**
- 2) Create legislation for Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging.**
- 3) Increased funding for public and private entities for recycling education and equipment.**