

Local Governments Support Recycling Modernization (SB 582/HB 2065)



Chair Beyer and Members of the Committee:

The local governments and governmental associations listed above strongly support the passage this session of comprehensive legislation to modernize Oregon's recycling system.

Our state's nationally renowned recycling programs have provided efficient and environmentally beneficial services to Oregon's households and businesses for more than three decades. However, action is urgently needed to address changes in materials and markets that have created significant challenges to the sustainable and equitable operation of these programs.

At the most basic level, the products and packaging we buy have changed. Easily recyclable paper has increasingly been replaced by a dizzying array of plastics and new types of packaging, many of which tout misleading claims of recyclability. As a result, it has become more complicated for our residents to know what should and should not go in the bin. In turn, the work of recycling facilities to sort through and find markets for those materials has become increasingly difficult and costly. Moreover, concerns persist among the public that what we put in the bin may end up polluting the land, air and waters of developing countries.

Local governments find themselves in the thick of these challenges. Diminishing markets and higher quality standards for recyclables have pushed up costs for our ratepayers. Educating residents on what can go in the bin amid a blizzard of new materials and confusing labeling is a seemingly unending task. Our residents are highly concerned when they see news reports about our supposedly recycled plastics polluting other countries. We also recognize the need to provide greater equity in the system, both in access to recycling services – particularly for rural residents and people who live in apartments and multifamily homes – and in the ability of recycling workers to earn a living wage.

SB 582/HB 2065 is intended to address these challenges by restructuring our recycling system in three fundamental ways. The bill will:

- **Require producers to take responsibility for the products and packaging they put onto the market.** Producers, who have the greatest ability to make changes that can make their products easier to manage, need to step up to responsibilities that local governments have too long borne on their own. The bill will require producers to provide resources to assist local governments in improving services, including expanding multifamily recycling.
- **Ensure a responsible and equitable recycling system.** Misleading labeling on products and packaging about their recyclability will be prohibited. Recycling workers will receive a living wage. Collected materials will not be allowed to pollute other communities – domestic or foreign.
- **Modernize the recycling system statewide.** Establish a statewide list of what will be collected for recycling based on a thorough evaluation of economic and environmental benefits. Require payments from producers to level the cost of getting recycling materials to markets.

SB 582/HB 2065 is the product of more than two years of research and stakeholder discussions. Local governments were directly involved in these efforts. While we understand that a comprehensive reform like this will undergo refinement in the legislative process, we are committed to working with you to carry out the intent of the partners who joined to develop this proposal.

We strongly support SB 582/HB 2065 and urge you to move it forward.