



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and
Agriculture In support of H.2148 - An Act to require producer responsibility for collection, reuse
and recycling of discarded electronic products

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The League of Women Voters of the United States asserts in its Guide to Public Policy Positions that “Environmental protection and pollution control, including waste management, should be considered a cost of providing a product or service.” The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts has supported responsible collection, reuse and recycling of discarded electronic products since 2009.

The Massachusetts Department of Environment Protection (DEP) reports that discarded electronics continue to be the fastest growing category of waste in Massachusetts. Current Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates indicate that roughly 70% of discarded electronics end up in the solid waste stream. And while total e-waste tonnage constitutes 1-2% of solid waste tonnage, it comprises 70% of the toxic waste load due to lead, mercury, PVC and cadmium and other chemicals and compounds that contaminate our soil, waterways and atmosphere when disposed of illegally or recycled unsafely here and around the globe.

In addition to the significant environmental harm and health issues related to e-waste, municipalities bear the financial burden of its collection and disposal. The DEP estimates that Massachusetts communities spend between \$2 and \$4 million annually on e-waste processing and disposal in addition to unreported costs related to transportation, collection and administration of e-waste programs. The Massachusetts Municipal Association and over 240 municipalities have endorsed passage of producer responsibility legislation to address e-waste.

The proposed legislation is notable for several key features:

- Inclusion of a broad scope of covered products. In addition to computers, CRTs and laptops, this bill covers printers, scanners, game consoles and other electronics, allowing a wide range of products to be brought in for collection;
- Requirement that producers pay all costs of the collection, reuse and recycling of covered electronic products, including those collected by municipalities, providing welcome relief to towns and cities struggling to adequately provide essential town services, while promoting increased reuse and recycling of highly toxic materials;

- Promoting reuse over recycling by providing a financial incentive of reduced fees to collectors who send units for reuse rather than recycling;
- Promoting producer redesign of products that are easier to recycle and to repair for reuse to reduce processor fees. When producers have responsibility for the end use remains of their products, they design them more carefully, reducing wasteful packaging and toxic substances at the front end.
- Processor certification to e-Stewards Standard for Responsible Recycling and Reuse of Electronics or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's "Responsible Recycling" (R2) Standard or equivalent will ensure the safe disposal of electronics beyond useful life through reuse or recycling, a safeguard of the health of workers and the public.

As written, H.2148 provides multiple financial and environmental benefits to Massachusetts municipalities, residents and society at large by shifting the responsibility for products at the end of their useful life from a public that may or may not purchase them to the producers of those products.

The public has borne the burden of environmental degradation, health impacts and wasteful resource depletion of product manufacture and disposal for a very long time. It is time that producers assume the full life-cycle costs associated with their products. It is the responsible and appropriate thing to do.

For these reasons, LWVMA requests that the Committee give H.2148 a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.