



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture
in support of
H878/S517/S610 An Act to save recycling costs in the Commonwealth
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The League is submitting this testimony in strong support of H878/S517/S610. While this testimony relates specifically to these packaging-related bills, the League supports the underlying principle of extended producer responsibility in other bills such as those for paint, mattresses, and electronics as well.

Our focus in this testimony is on reducing the increasing levels of waste from packaging, levels that are unsustainable and burdensome to residents, municipalities and institutional and commercial generators (e.g. large scale operations such as schools, nursing homes, apartments, etc.) that bear the full cost of handling and disposal of these materials. It was hard to avoid the increased level of non-recyclable and not-quite-recyclable packaging waste that consumers were hauling from home to their town transfer stations or stuffing into their trash bins during the Covid pandemic due to dependence on online shopping and delivery programs. And the trend of online shopping does not appear to be lessening. The data show that, even for materials that are recyclable, we are generating far more waste than can be managed profitably by municipal recycling facilities because many materials seem or are labeled as recyclable but are actually not so in our current system.¹ Paper and packaging constitute 46% of Massachusetts' disposed and recycled municipal solid waste.²

As a state and as a nation, the focus for decades has been on recycling rather than waste **reduction**, the first "R" in the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle mantra. Waste generation presents a growing, negative impact on our pocketbooks, disposal capacity, environment and health, with negative impacts of environmental pollution greater for environmental justice and overburdened communities.³ In addition to bearing the full cost of processing and disposal of waste, taxpayers and municipalities also bear the social cost of environmental pollution on our health and environment, which is generally not accounted for in 'up front' costs of disposal.

Requiring the producers of packaging to provide for the safe collection, recycling and recovery of packaging is not a radical or new idea. First introduced in Sweden in 1990,⁴ Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) has expanded across the globe to cover a range of products.⁵ Because of differences in program provisions and items covered, apples-to-apples comparisons of effectiveness are difficult. But EPR laws in Europe demonstrate how effective thoughtful EPR policies can be.⁶ Europe's experience is also instructive in terms of implementation today.

¹ [MassDEP 2017 Solid Waste Data Update](#), Table 2;

² Ibid

³ [The impact of incinerators on human health and environment](#)

⁴ Thomas Lindhqvist and Karl Lidgren, "Models for Extended Producer Responsibility" in Sweden, October 1990.

⁵ [Extended Producer Responsibility](#): Science Direct, 2014.

⁶ [In Europe, Extended Producer Responsibility \(EPR\) is the Law: E The Environmental Magazine, 3 2011.](#)



Key features of H878/S517/S610 include:

- Creation of a multi-stakeholder Sustainable Packaging Advisory Board
- Creation of a single Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO) responsible for:
 - Exemption of small producers
 - Plan development in consultation with the Advisory Board
 - Improvements on the existing infrastructure
 - Incentives for improved design, use of less environmentally damaging materials and packaging
 - Creation of a Sustainable Packaging Trust, overseen by MassDEP, with funding from the PRO, to cover the cost of administration/enforcement

Massachusetts is being hailed for a groundbreaking new climate law enacted in March 2021, *An Act Creating a Next-Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy*. The law establishes an ambitious timeline for reducing greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors of the economy beginning this year. A 2009 US Environmental Protection Agency report concluded that 29% of US greenhouse gas emissions come from the manufacture, transport and disposal of consumer products.⁷ Packaging is an issue beyond the control of individual consumers or municipalities. Its environmental and health damaging impacts can only be lessened by better design using fewer and eco-friendly materials. EPR provides an incentive to manufacturers and producers to make those design changes.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, representing 47 local Leagues across the Commonwealth, urges you to support our environment and new state emissions targets by reporting out H878/S517/S610 favorably.

Thank you for your consideration.

⁷ [Opportunities to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions Through Materials and Land Management Practices](#): US Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response. September 2009.