



April 29, 2024

Senator John Marty, Chair
Senator Nick Frentz, Vice Chair
Senate Finance Committee
1200 Minnesota Senate Bldg.

RE: Support for the Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act, as included in the Senate Environment Omnibus bill.

Chair Marty, Vice-Chair Frentz, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in **support** of the Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act, as incorporated into the Senate Environment Omnibus bill, on behalf of Upstream. Upstream is a US-based non-profit and leading change agency for the reuse movement in the US and Canada. We spark innovative solutions to help people, communities and businesses shift from single-use to reuse.

In our current linear economy, roughly 15% of wood harvested, 22% of aluminum mined, 36% of plastic created, and half of glass produced goes primarily to making single-use packaging that is consumed in a matter of minutes before it is trashed, littered, or recycled. This system, which is funded by taxpayers, perpetuates the extraction of precious natural resources while generating significant waste and pollution. The MN Packaging Waste and Cost Reduction Act will transform this inefficient and wasteful paradigm by creating an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for packaging and paper products with reuse provisions and incentives. **EPR is a comprehensive, systemic policy that will lay the foundation for Minnesota's transition to a circular economy.**

Successful packaging EPR programs have been operating around the world for decades.

In fact, packaging EPR is the most common type of EPR program globally - more than paint, electronics, household hazardous waste, appliances, or any of the other programs developed to date. Over one billion people live in places where consumer goods companies pay some or all of the costs of packaging collection and recycling. In these jurisdictions, recycling rates for covered materials are significantly higher than in countries without EPR. **Most covered producers under these systems are the same global companies that would be held responsible under an EPR program in MN, and the same ones who are now responsible for their packaging and paper products in Colorado, California, Oregon, and Maine.**

This Act includes provisions to support not just recycling but waste prevention and reuse as well, in line with [Upstream's principles](#) for reuse in EPR. While packaging EPR is a

tried-and-true strategy, this bill will employ this time-tested approach to achieve cutting edge results for people and the planet alike. When viewed through a consumption-based lens, packaging and packaged goods represent over 40% of US greenhouse gas emissions. **Reuse systems are [far more effective](#) at reducing climate emissions, boosting local economies, generating domestic jobs, and of course eliminating waste than recycling and other downstream interventions, which is why reuse is increasingly being incorporated into EPR policy.** For example, the CO2 impacts of disposable paper, plastic, and bioplastic cups are 3 to 10 times greater than reusable ceramic, stainless steel and glass alternatives. Over its average life, a reusable stainless steel cup at an event venue will generate *over 160 times less climate pollution* than its single-use plastic counterpart. **This bill will require that producers set targets to transition a portion of their packaging into reusable, returnable containers and make investments throughout the state into infrastructure that will enable all Minnesotans to access a new reuse economy.**

For too long, local governments and communities have shouldered the burdens - both financial and operational - of managing packaging waste. Municipalities and community leaders are powerful catalysts for reuse and recycling, and critical players in the transition to a circular economy, but they can't get there alone. There is limited control at the local level over the products and packaging that corporations place onto the market - and limited resources for managing the associated waste. The time has come for producers to take responsibility for their products and packaging, from design through end-of-life management. **We thank Senator Morrison for her leadership on this urgent bill and strongly encourage you to favorably report it from your Committee.**

Please feel free to contact me at sydney@upstreamolutions.org if you have any questions.

Thank you for all you do,

Sydney Harris
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