



February 22nd , 2012

Senator Edward Meyer
Representative Richard Roy
The Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Meyer and Representative Roy:

My name is Adrienne Farrar Houël. I am here today representing Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises, Inc., (GBCE) one of the two founding partners of Park City Green, a mattress recycling facility in Bridgeport, to support for **Senate Bill 89, An Act Establishing a Mattress Stewardship Program**. The purpose of my testimony is to inform you of the new opportunity available in our state for the environmentally responsible disposal of old mattresses that will respond to your and our objectives to eliminate mattresses from our waste stream economically.

Park City Green is a startup, non-profit enterprise in the City of Bridgeport with a mission to provide economic development for the Bridgeport region, create sustainable living wage jobs for some of the region's most vulnerable and hardest to employ citizen's and provide a sustainable and environmentally sound way to dispose of mattresses and divert them from landfills and mass burn facilities. It was founded in November 2011 by two non-profit agencies, GBCE and Family ReEntry-Fresh Start Program.

Approximately 85 percent of the millions of mattresses and box springs thrown into landfills and incinerators nationwide every year are recyclable. These mattresses are a dangerous nuisance in the waste stream: they take up large amounts of space at transfer stations and landfills, create flammable air pockets and do not burn well in our incinerators, do not compact well, and can create dangerous conditions for workers. The rapidly rising costs of disposal are supported by tax payers.

One lower cost alternative to burning or sending mattresses to remote out-of-state landfills is to deconstruct them and to recycle the components (such as polyurethane foam, wood, cotton, and metal). This process creates entry level jobs that are appropriate for people with barriers to employment. As the only non-profit mattress recycler in the entire North East, the Bridgeport facility aims to keep 100,000 mattresses per year out of the incinerators and to provide jobs with benefits for at least 15-20 workers.

The process is simple. Used mattresses and box-springs will be collected from municipal transfer stations, institutions such as hospitals, universities and mattress retailers, and brought to our facility in Bridgeport. Workers separate the mattresses into their component parts and prepare them for recycling. The resulting commodities are then sold on the market to manufacturers such as carpet pad makers (who buy the polyurethane foam), steel recyclers here in Connecticut (who purchase metal springs), and textile companies (for the cotton). Workers learn valuable warehouse skills such as forklift driving, baling, and materials handling.

A Community Development Corporation

The principal goal of this project is to reduce the unemployment rate of the City of Bridgeport that stands at 11.7% as of January 2012, and, according to our workforce investment board, reaches 25-30% in our most disadvantaged neighborhoods. This program will employ the City's most difficult to employ residents: those who have been chronically un or under-employed such as previously incarcerated youth, veterans who have not reintegrated well into society after recent tours of duty, those who have suffered foreclosures, and single parents. The target population includes those with minimal education and skills who may not have high school diplomas.

Park City Green has already seen keen interest in mattress recycling from many municipalities, businesses and Connecticut residents who want to make sure that their old mattress or box spring does not make it into a remote out of state landfill or burn facility but instead is responsibly recycled. The passage of this bill will greatly increase the likelihood of successful recycling efforts of not only Park City Green but others who may see a business opportunity to create jobs and provide an environmentally friendly way to deal with a problem in our waste stream.

We thank the Committee for organizing this hearing to better understand this complex environmental and economic issue and we strongly urge you to continue the state's leadership in environmental issues by recommending the adoption of SB 89 by our General Assembly.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Farrar Houël

Adrienne Farrar Houël
President/CEO