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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Environment Committee
March 8, 2013
Testimony In Favor of
HB 6437 AAC A Mattress Stewardship Program

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Connecticut Chapter of the Sierra Club. I hold a Masters of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

This bill establishes an effective, appropriate program for the capture and disposal of used mattresses. It is better structured than last year's SB 89, which passed the senate but was not called for a vote in the House. It has more acceptance from the manufacturers' association.

Why do we need this bill?

Because there are no heirloom mattresses.

Every mattress sold will need disposal someday. As you hear from experts in the field, they are bulky, difficult to handle, unsuitable for processing by trash to energy plants. They litter the roads and backways and river banks of Connecticut. And they cost the towns a significant sum to process. So this stewardship program turns bulky waste items into recycled materials, reduces litter, and saves the towns money. Any downside? Not to my knowledge.

But the larger significance of this bill is the creation of a new Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) aka Product Stewardship (PS) program for mattresses. EPR says that holding the manufacturer responsible for post-consumer disposal of his product is the most effective way to reduce our solid waste stream. Our solid waste policy instructs us to move towards zero discardable waste. Don't burn or landfill a mattress which has reached its end of life. Capture it before it is discarded by the riverside, disassemble it, and send the component materials to be re-worked into fabrics, carpet padding, recycled metal. Tack on a small surcharge at retail so that users of the product become the ones to pay for its disposal. Don't have the state run the program, but limit state involvement to looking over the shoulder of those who do (a manufacturer's group) simply to make sure the program is run appropriately.

Remember to tell the store salesman to remind his customers that they can rest easy. They don't have to worry about the trade-in becoming part of the ubiquitous piles of rubbish in the movie Wall-E. They can go ahead and buy their new one: the old one will become useful parts of new products.

If reducing towns' costs aren't enough incentive: we now have 2 companies in the state with staff recycling the mattresses, so this program creates jobs.

We do EPR now for electronics and paint. Next year, perhaps carpets.