

**Testimony
for the
Environment Committee
of the
Connecticut Legislature
on
Senate Bill No. 233**

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Submitted by

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INTRODUCTION

The CT Chapter of the National Waste and Recycling Association (hereafter the chapter) represents an industry that is dedicated to the environmentally protective, sustainable and economically efficient management of recoverable and recyclable materials, discards and wastes.

We have a vision of a society that reduces waste, recycles more and recovers value from discards to the maximum extent practicable and properly disposes the wastes that remain. We approach our job as reality-checkers who must negotiate, adapt to, and address the day-to-day and evolving conditions associated with collecting and handling recyclables, recoverable materials, discards and wastes. We are in a unique position to offer well informed perspectives on the realities of how these materials are managed today, and how they can be better managed tomorrow.

We are grateful for this opportunity to provide these comments to the CT Environment Committee on legislation about consumer-based packaging materials.

Senate Bill No. 233 – An Act Concerning Consumer-Based Packaging Reductions

The chapter -- after thoroughly reviewing S.B. No 233 and the draft Comprehensive Materials Management Strategy (CMMS) that is being used by the DEEP as the basis to update the State-wide Solid Waste Master Plan -- urges the committee to exercise great care here in its consideration of this measure.

Packaging is but one element of CTs municipal waste stream; and, there are many things that can be considered or defined as packaging. The packaging industry – on all fronts -- has done great work, good work even acknowledged by DEEP in various reports, in recent history, to reduce excessive packaging by lite weighting, by design and material innovation and other changes and innovations of the various packaging materials used and products made. In addition, CTs private recycling and waste industry have stepped up here too and have made significant investments, in what are now fully operational, DEEP permitted private recycling programs and facilities to manage these discarded packaging materials. These programs and facilities employ thousands of hardworking men and women and pay millions in taxes in the state and manage vast amounts of discarded packaging. These facilities and companies are at the center of the industry that has for decades, and will continue for decades more, to successfully manage these packaging materials for all CT citizens and businesses.

The chapter has some other questions and concerns with this legislation too since it seems: 1) to get ahead of the State-wide Solid Waste Update process that is currently in play regarding proper policy development in this solid waste policy and plan area; and 2) since it seems to be seeking legislative approval about an already pre-ordained DEEP plan to implement a product stewardship program for packaging discards regardless of what the state-wide waste plan update produces in terms of comments and public input. And also what findings the packaging study called for in this legislation produces.

The chapter is supportive of studying various constituent parts of CT solid waste stream, including the packaging study called for in this legislation. We believe the DEEPs current emphasis here though on pushing forward a packaging product stewardship program for CT is way premature. Somewhere along the way, over the last few years of DEEP solid waste and recycling policy discussions, the notion of the vital and critical role markets play in helping everybody divert discarded, after useful life recoverable materials -- that would be otherwise become waste and be disposed -- has been overlooked or downplayed. The chapter, companies and hard working men and women of CTs recycling and waste industry encourage the committee, by amendment, to direct the DEEP through this measure to first explore ways to improve markets -- and to help create new markets -- for the materials we are already routinely recovering and for others that we could recover by some planning and modest retrofitting of existing programs. We believe such improvements to the markets for these materials will yield tremendous environmental quality improvements for CT citizens, communities and businesses with far less disruption than the major changes that would be required by changing over to a totally new and disruptive product stewardship program for discarded packaging materials in CT.

Thank-you for your attention to our comments and views. We stand ready to work with the sponsors, committee, DEEP officials and others, and with our customers to create the best recycling and waste management programs for CT as possible.

The CT chapter of the National Waste and Recycling Association represents the private taxpaying waste and recycling haulers and companies that work in CT every day to responsibly manage the after useful life discards, materials, recyclables and wastes generated by its citizens, communities and businesses. We believe in strong, sustainable environmentally responsible programs that are run with the efficiency and expertise that comes from a competitive and robust private marketplace that provides and innovates these services routinely.