To: Connecticut General Assembly Committee on the Environment
From: Christine O'Neill
Date: February 24, 2023
Re: **In Favor of HB 6664**

Honorable Committee Members:

I am testifying as an individual in **strong support of HB 6664**. I hold a Masters Degree in Energy and Environmental Management and work as an Environmental Planner for my Council of Governments. I have spent the last two years of my professional life deeply involved with waste management issues.

First, **packaging EPR** is a no-brainer for Connecticut. Over one billion people live in jurisdictions with packaging EPR globally. It is proven to increase recycling rates, incentivize packaging minimization, and reduce plastic pollution. Reputable studies from Columbia University and the State of Oregon have empirically proven that EPR will NOT raise consumer prices. Brand owners deserve to be responsible for the packaging choices they make, rather than leaving taxpayers to foot the bill of recycling or disposal. DEEP estimates EPR for packaging would save municipalities 50 million dollars in recycling expenses and reduce Connecticut's "self-sufficiency" deficit by up to 190,000 tons annually by 2028.

Next, mandating access to **food waste separation** by 2028 will help Connecticut achieve its waste diversion goals, prevent release of greenhouse gas emissions, and keep valuable organic material out of problematic waste to energy plants. Consider that America's food waste currently has the same climate footprint as the entire U.S. aviation industry. Unfortunately, we are in a chicken-and-egg situation with infrastructure here – but if we put this mandate on the books in 2023, I am confident we can attract developers and have facilities in place by 2028.

Restructuring **MSW assessment fees** to align with DEEP's waste hierarchy is a step in the right direction; however, I recommend halving those fees to decrease the burden on taxpayers and to stymie objections from municipalities.

But to be honest, I am so tired of talking about money. Can't we consider, just this once, doing something for the environment? We *know* the measures in this bill will reduce waste and increase recycling - we have only to look at other countries that successfully implemented these programs back in the 90s. Think about what reducing waste would mean for nature - think about the birds who die with stomachs full of plastic, the marine life smothered by floating debris, and the unsuspecting wildlife that mistake our litter for a meal. Birds and fish and foxes cannot testify before you this morning, but they deserve a voice, too.

I also grow increasingly frustrated with the shortsightedness of local leaders, who see something like the increase in assessment fees and rush to throw the baby out with the bathwater. The fees are a disincentive to continue burning and landfilling our trash; a disincentive that is desperately needed, because the shift to sustainable waste management is not happening fast enough. The waste crisis is real, it is here, and it needs to be addressed with bold action like HB 6664.

Thank you for your time.

All my best,

Christine O'Neill
9 June Street
Wolcott, CT

Notes and sources

- One billion number comes from Upstream Policy Institute https://upstreamsolutions.org/extended-producer-responsibility-for-packaging
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      Figure 2: Countries that have enacted EPR for PPP laws around the world (in green). (Map adapted from Environmental Packaging International Lorax)[65]
- Columbia Study: "Economic impacts to consumers from extended producer responsibility (EPR) regulation in the consumer packaged goods sector" by Satyajit Bose, June 27, 2022
    - Columbia university's study calculated that "Even if EPR compliance costs were to lead to a doubling of packaging costs throughout the value chain, the computed upper bound is approximately 0.69% of grocery spending." Less than a one percent increase at the grocery checkout, and that doesn't even factor in the *reduction* in muni taxes for not having to pay for disposal and recycling.
    - Also notes that "Previous research indicates that most US food, drugstore, and mass merchandise chains charge nearly uniform prices across stores even though they could increase their profits by exploiting the wide variation in demand elasticities and income levels across stores."
- Aviation industry stat from ReFED.org , a national nonprofit dedicated to ending food waste - https://refed.org/
- International developers: https://www.andionglobal.com/ / SMM = Sustainable Materials Management