

H.878/S.610

AN ACT TO SAVE RECYCLING COSTS IN THE COMMONWEALTH

Sponsored by Rep. Michael Day and Sen. Michael Rush

What does this bill do?

It helps reduce packaging waste and improves recycling by creating a ‘polluter pays’ model of Producer Responsibility for packaging and printed paper, making producers responsible for fully funding residential collection and recovery of materials they use and sell.



Producers must develop and implement a comprehensive, DEP-approved plan to increase combined reduction and recycling of covered materials to 100% by 2035 (with a series of milestones). The fees paid by producers incentivize more sustainable packaging design, and will fund public education and infrastructure improvements to ensure free and convenient access to collection programs for all MA residents.

Why is better management of packaging and printed paper important?

Taxpayers and municipalities are bearing the brunt of skyrocketing recycling costs from ever-increasing use of packaging and printed paper, now about half of residential waste, and much of which is non-recyclable. Many countries are no longer willing to process our contaminated, low-value mixed recyclables/waste for us.

Emissions from mass production and disposal of single-use products are driving the climate crisis and inflicting environmental injustice, sickening the disproportionately low-income communities and people of color who live near manufacturing, landfilling, and incineration facilities. Continually mining and harvesting raw materials to turn them into disposable items is challenging Earth’s capacity to sustain us.

Plastic packaging items are often littered and easily lost into both land and sea, where they will persist, concentrate toxins, entangle and displace food for wildlife all through the food chain, and risk disrupting the ecosystems on which our own health and economy depend.

How does this bill save recycling costs for Massachusetts?

The Dept. of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) must approve the producer plan as meeting all requirements and will then enforce compliance. A multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee is created to advise on the plan.

MassDEP will set fee schedules based on the types and amounts of material producers generate. The fees must fully reimburse school and residential waste collection costs, as well as the costs of program administration and enforcement. **The fee schedule will also be structured to incentivize:**

- Reduction, reusability, and improved recyclability of materials used
- Less toxic material choices, to protect public health
- Domestic processing of materials, to stimulate local infrastructure and green jobs

Is Producer Responsibility a new idea?

Not at all. Producer responsibility programs have successfully reduced waste and increased recycling rates around the world, including in Canada, Europe, China, and Brazil. New producer responsibility legislation is under consideration in at least eleven states and in Congress (the *Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act*).

How is this bill related to those on other disposable items (bags, bottles, straws, etc.)?

This bill will produce structural reform covering a wide range of packaging and printed paper products, complementing other bills aimed at reducing unnecessary pollution from specific classes of disposable products with reusable and/or less toxic alternatives.



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IS SUPPORTED BY:

The City of Boston

Clean Water Action

Conservation Law Foundation

Environment Massachusetts

Environmental League of Massachusetts

Keep Massachusetts Beautiful

Massachusetts Municipal Association

MassPIRG

Massachusetts Product Stewardship Council

Surfrider Foundation MA

*South Shore Recycling Cooperative
and Others...*