



March 4, 2020

The Honorable Paul Tonko
Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change
U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Tonko and Committee Members:

As the Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change considers national recycling initiatives, opportunities and challenges, I am pleased to provide the following testimony on behalf of the Glass Packaging Institute (GPI).

GPI is the North American trade association for the glass container manufacturing companies, glass recycling and other partners and suppliers to the industry. The industry works throughout the country on issues surrounding sustainability, recycling, energy and greenhouse gas emissions reduction efforts.

Glass has long been recognized as a core, and one of the original, recyclable packaging materials. For food and beverages packaging and storage, glass also enjoy "GRAS" status (Generally Recognized as Safe) with the U.S. FDA. Glass is a circular and sustainable packaging material that can be reused, and infinitely recycled, back into containers with no loss of quality.

Glass Container Recycling Background

The glass container manufacturing industry has a significant stake in the effectiveness of recycling programs. Recycled glass constitutes a significant part of residential curbside recycling, which by weight, is anywhere from 15-25% of a program's total volume. Recycled glass also is a key component of the manufacturing process. The US glass container industry purchases 2.3 million tons of recycled glass each year. This reduces GHG emissions by over 800,000 tons (equivalent to taking greater than 90,000 cars off the road for a year) and negates the need for over 2.7 million tons of virgin materials, saving natural resources.

The average glass container manufactured in the US is made with one-third recycled glass. For every 10% of recycled glass re-melted to manufacture new bottles and jars, manufacturing energy use is reduced 2-3%. For every three tons of recycled glass used, carbon dioxide emissions are reduced by one ton. This is because recycled glass melts at lower temperatures than raw materials alone.

Thus, the more recycled glass used translates into lower energy use and lower carbon emissions. Additionally, use of recycled glass translates into less material required overall to produce an equivalent amount of finished glass. For example, one ton of recycled glass yields one ton of finished glass, whereas 1.2 tons of virgin materials are needed to make one ton of finished glass.

Ongoing and Significant Challenges Present in the U.S. Recycling Collection System

Over the past two years, the broader U.S. recycling system has been challenged by increasingly high recyclable export contamination standards, impacting the exportability of these materials to long-standing principle markets. The tougher standards have resulted in fewer exports, and much lower revenue received from the sale of nearly all recyclables. These realities have significantly increased the cost for local governments to provide recycling services to their constituents.

As a result, many local waste management providers have chosen to reduce the number of items residents may put out for collection—in some instances, removing glass bottles and jars from curbside recycling. Others have discontinued recycling programs altogether. These difficult decisions have led to higher landfill tip fee costs for localities and increased cost for disposal of glass and other recyclables.

Single stream recycling collection programs handle the majority of American's curbside recyclables. These recyclables are sorted at materials recovery facilities (MRFs), sold to secondary processors and finally, manufacturing end markets. If the quality of materials coming out of the MRFs was higher, markets for these materials (both demand and the prices paid for them) would improve. The quality and effectiveness of single-stream systems are only as good as their collection and sorting systems—many of which are dated and inefficient.

GPI support efforts for investments and matching grants to assist MRFs in upgrading equipment and improving output quality. However, provision of these resources should be tied to measurable results and standards. These standards should meet manufacturing specifications for their end market destinations.

Additionally, MRFs and the broader waste-hauling community should adhere to quality standards for glass and other core recyclables. Markets for quality glass are very strong. Glass collected from more efficient systems, such as bottle deposit programs and newer drop-off programs have strong end-markets.

GPI also supports investments that encourage communities to consider single-stream alternatives, such as dual-stream or alternative drop-off collection that increase quality material. These alternatives are effective solutions in areas where waste-haulers and MRFs have not upgraded equipment and facilities to meet manufacturing industry specifications and standards.

Support for the RECOVER & RECYCLE Acts

Two bills have been introduced in the House to address recyclable materials contamination, and to support the recycling supply chain and manufacturing end markets - **H.R. 5115**, the *Realizing the Economic Opportunities and Values of Expanding Recycling (RECOVER) Act* and **H.R. 5906**, the *Recycling Enhancements to Collection and Yield through Consumer Learning and Education Act of 2020 (RECYCLE) Act*.

The **RECOVER Act** would provide matching grants to states and local governments, through the EPA, for specific public-private partnerships and investments to improve the collection, sorting and processing of recyclable materials. The EPA would be required to develop comprehensive reporting requirements, tied to standards, for local project recipients. Measuring results and setting standards would be key markers of the RECOVER Act.

The **RECYLCE Act** would provide grants to local governments, which would be used to educate residents on recycling programs and best practices. It would also develop a national recycling toolkit, to further assist consumers on recyclable and accepted materials for recycling programs.

The RECOVER and RECYCLE Acts are complimentary bills. By addressing recycling contamination on both the front and back end of the recycling streams, increased revenue for recyclable commodities would be received, and more reasonable recycling program costs for local governments could be realized.

Both the RECOVER and RECYCLE Acts come at a critical time as recycling markets and their supply chains face historic economic pressures to improve the quality of recyclable materials, increase manufacturing efficiencies and reduce landfill disposal. We encourage all Committee members to consider co-sponsorship and support of both bills.

Please contact me with any questions you may have, and to follow up.

Thank you,



Scott DeFife
President