



June 17, 2020

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member

U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper and Committee Members:

As the Committee considers the state of recycling, 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) within 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 – Improving Energy Efficiency & Air Quality

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.

It is also a key component of the manufacturing process. The US glass container industry purchases 2.3 million tons of recycled glass each year. This reduces plant GHG emissions 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 use, saving natural resources.

The average glass container manufactured in the US is made with one-third recycled content. For every 10% of recycled glass re-melted to produce new bottles and jars, manufacturing energy use can be 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 flow of these materials to the long-standing principle international 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 overall increased costs for disposal of glass and other recyclables.

Based on recent surveys and studies, millions of additional tons glass that could be beneficially reused are now being sent to landfills around the country, due to a lack of modern equipment at materials recovery facilities (MRFs), collection and recovery systems, or freight and other transportation barriers. Properly sorted, quality glass has always had strong end markets, and the US glass packaging industry is striving to increase the amount of recycled content in its bottles and jar production, which is primarily sourced domestically. The increased financial pressure that the industry faces due to recent international trade developments and the COVID-19 response have placed increased budget pressure on local governments. This is a pivotal point in time for the federal government to help preserve essential supply chains for sustainable packaging materials, and to help bolster the national recycling infrastructure.

Support for the RECYCLE & RECOVER Acts

GPI strongly supports legislation introduced in the Senate and House to address recyclable materials contamination, and to support the recycling supply chain and manufacturing end markets - **S. 2941**, the Recycling Enhancements to Collection and Yield through Consumer Learning and Education Act of 2020 (RECYCLE) Act (House companion **H.R. 5906**) and **H.R. 5115**, the Realizing the Economic Opportunities and Values of Expanding Recycling (**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, in an effort to reduce contamination.

On the House side, 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**. GPI supports the introduction of Senate companion legislation.

The **RECYCLE** and **RECOVER 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 **RECYCLE** and **RECOVER 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.

These federal legislative initiatives, tied in with state, local and private investments can work to improve single stream recycling collection programs, which handle the majority of American's curbside recyclables. Single stream recyclables are sorted at 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 cost) 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.

GPI supports investments that encourage communities to consider single stream alternatives, such as dual stream or alternative drop off collections that increase quality material. These alternatives are effective solutions in areas where waste haulers and MRFs have not upgraded equipment and facilities to meet the higher manufacturing specifications of the glass container, and other manufacturing industries.

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

Thank you,



Scott DeFife
President