OPED – 500 words

We Must Pass EPR for PPP in New York’s Budget

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Municipal recycling programs are struggling and are precariously close to failure due to factors beyond the control of local governments. **There is only one solution**: legislation being considered by the New York State Legislature regarding **packaging waste reduction and recycling**, also known as **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** for packaging and paper products (PPP).

**We must enact a packaging EPR law this year as part of the state budget package.**

It is critical that this issue be addressed in the budget because the Department of Environmental Conservation desperately needs these resources to begin implementing measures to fix New York’s fragmented recycling system and build an equitable, cost-effective program that is not financed by taxpayers. Local governments need DEC resources in place to initiate this policy and addressing it outside the budget risks costly delays or even the potential for this crucial issue to once again not be addressed.

**Enacting an EPR for PPP law will save New York local governments more than $300 million each year, expand access to recycling for all state residents, and triple stagnant recycling rates.**

Our state’s communities and taxpayers spend that much money each year just to recycle, which does not even include the cost of waste disposal. A packaging EPR law in New York will hold brand owners responsible for financing and managing their post-consumer packaging and paper, which is 40% of the waste stream.

Four states – Maine, Oregon, Colorado, and California – have already enacted packaging EPR laws. In Europe and Canada, over 40 countries and provinces have packaging EPR programs – many of which have been in place for more than 35 years – and some track recycling rates as high as 80%. We have an opportunity now to set a new course for New York.

**The impact will be massive for New York state, where the recycling rate is just 18%.**

For many decades, local governments in New York have subsidized the handling of millions of tons of packaging generated in the state. But now, international markets for recycled materials are volatile, and governments must decide whether or not they can continue funding and operating their recycling program – while facing the realization that even waste *disposal* capacity is not guaranteed in the long-term. Furthermore, they cannot control the types of materials used by consumer brands for packaging, which becomes a local government responsibility to manage, no matter how unrecyclable that material might be.

The governor’s proposal would substantially increase recycling rates, reduce contamination, create green jobs, provide hundreds of millions of dollars in savings *each year* for taxpayers, and foster waste reduction through ambitious, yet achievable, standards. It will also lower greenhouse gas emissions from waste, helping the state to reach the climate goals established by the Climate Action Council. In fact, the CAC strongly recommended that a packaging EPR bill be enacted in New York state for that very reason.

**The need for a new recycling approach has never been clearer. For [LOCAL GOVERNMENT] that time must be now.**