

The Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act Is the Most Realistic Path Forward

New York is heading toward an uncomfortable waste management crossroads, after years of ignored warnings from local governments on the front lines.

Product packaging and paper now make up roughly 44% of the municipal solid waste stream. At the same time, municipalities are expected to meet increasingly ambitious state waste reduction goals. The problem is simple: under the current structure, those goals are not achievable.

For decades, local governments have built and sustained a recycling system capable of capturing nearly 75% of packaging and paper generated by households. But capability does not equal performance. In reality, we are recovering less than half of those materials, and statewide recycling rates have remained largely stagnant for over a decade.

This is not for lack of effort.

Local governments have done the work. They have built collection infrastructure, developed programs, invested in education, and navigated years of market disruption and policy change. They have adapted as materials have become lighter, more complex, and harder to recycle. They have continued to operate systems despite rising costs and declining commodity values.

What they have not had is control.

Municipalities are responsible for managing packaging waste, yet they have virtually no influence over the materials entering the marketplace. That imbalance has left taxpayers and ratepayers carrying the financial and operational burden of a system they do not control.

That model is no longer sustainable.

Without stable funding and meaningful producer participation, local recycling programs will continue to struggle—unable to significantly reduce disposal or capture more recoverable material. If New York is serious about improving recycling, the system itself must change.

The Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act (PRRIA) offers the most realistic path forward. It is not perfect legislation. No bill of this scale ever is. But PRRIA represents a critical shift: it begins to align responsibility with influence. It provides a mechanism to stabilize funding, modernize local programs, and reduce the financial exposure currently borne by municipalities.

Just as importantly, it builds on the system that already exists rather than attempting to replace it. PRRIA gives local governments the resources and structure needed to improve performance and meet the State's long-term waste reduction goals.

[Name, Position, and Local Government Name]