

2026 MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT TALKING POINTS FOR PACKAGING EPR

Municipal governments seek to modernize and strengthen New York's recycling system through the implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging and paper products. This approach would leverage and improve existing local infrastructure, invest in upgrades needed to increase material capture, and build upon decades of public education and operational experience. By engaging product and packaging manufacturers as financial partners, EPR would stabilize funding and reduce the fiscal volatility and burden currently borne by local taxpayers to manage waste and recycling programs.

1. To meet the state solid waste goal of 85% waste reduction by 2050 the State must effectively quadruple recycling performance in ~24 years. Recycling rates have not meaningfully improved in decades, and without structural reform, incremental municipal efforts will not close the gap.
2. Targeting Paper Packaging is essential: 44% of New York's MSW is packaging and paper products (NY Needs Assessment). Alone, this category could address nearly half of the reduction goal.
3. The State is currently capturing only ~30% of packaging and paper, meaning ~70% of recoverable material is still being missed.

What we have learned from the [New York Needs Assessment](#)

1. Access Is Not the Core Problem — Performance Is
 - 97% of New Yorkers have curbside recycling access (half reside in NYC).
 - Multi-family access drops significantly outside NYC.
 - Despite access, recovery remains only 18–20% of total MSW.
 - The issue is not whether programs exist — it is whether they function effectively.
2. Most Recoverable Material Is Already Accepted
 - 76% of packaging and paper could be recovered through existing curbside programs.
 - 75%+ of programs accept common paper categories (mail, office paper, magazines, newspaper).
 - The gap is in capture rates, contamination, and funding, not acceptance lists alone.
3. Contamination Is Undermining System Performance
 - Single-stream contamination ranges 5%–26%, Dual-stream ranges 0%–15%.
 - High contamination increases processing costs and disposal expenses.
 - Critical unanswered questions:
 - Who pays for contaminated material and residue?
 - How is unrecyclable packaging accounted for?
 - Who enforces performance standards?
4. Municipal Costs Are Rising
 - Average processing costs: ~\$93.50 per ton, with volatility.
 - Disposal and transport costs continue to increase.
 - Education is underfunded, despite evidence that education reduces contamination.