

California textile recycling bill clears key Assembly hurdle

BY ALLISON PRANG | 08/15/2024 07:43 PM EDT

The California State Assembly's appropriations committee advanced legislation on Thursday that would create the nation's first state-level clothing recycling program, clearing a key hurdle for the bill to become law.

Details: State Sen. Josh Newman's "Responsible Textile Recovery Act of 2024," SB707, calls for clothing producers to create and fund an organization to help launch a textile recycling program that would be overseen by CalRecycle.

The appropriations panel cleared the bill on Thursday with amendments addressing online marketplaces and making "clarifying changes."

If the legislation is signed into law, it would still take several years before any kind of clothing recycling program would be operational. It requires a plan to be approved by CalRecycle no later than July 1, 2030.

Context: Newman's bill — which explicitly excludes items including mattresses and carpet — is meant to reduce the amount of textiles that end up in landfills every year. About 1.2 million tons of textiles were thrown out in California in 2021, and Newman's office has said that while most of that material could be reused or recycled, only about 15 percent currently is.

H&M, the popular fast-fashion retailer, has endorsed the legislation, but the California Retailers Association has remained neutral. The group's president, Rachel Michelin, expressed concern over the number of extended producer responsibility bills the state has in the works and questioned whether CalRecycle is overburdened.

"There's a lot of EPR bills in California," Michelin said Thursday. "We don't have a lot of money in California, either. We're broke."

The American Apparel & Footwear Association, which has previously opposed the bill, didn't respond to a request for comment.

What's next: The legislation now heads to a floor vote in the Assembly. If it passes, it would go back to the Senate floor for another vote.