

Legislation Introduced to Create First-of-its-Kind EPR Textile Recycling and Repair Program in CA

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Building on some of the legislative work done as part of a landmark year for plastic and battery recycling in California, Senator Josh Newman has introduced a bill to create a statewide collection and recycling program for textiles. Under SB 707, producers of clothing and other textiles will be required to implement and fund an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program that will enhance recycling and increase reuse in this important sector.

“Though many people don’t realize it, the clothing and fashion industry currently accounts for fully 10% of the world’s carbon dioxide output,” said Senator Newman (D-Fullerton). “The rise of ‘fast fashion,’ which revolves around the marketing and sale of low-cost, low-quality garments which tend to go out of style with increasing speed, threatens to have a long-lasting and devastating impact on our planet. By employing an EPR approach, SB 707 will enroll industry participants as partners and stewards to create an end-to-end framework that will reduce textile waste in California while supporting a second-hand clothing market that can continue to thrive.”

For Each year, the average US consumer discards more than 81 pounds of clothing, an increase of 55% per capita since the year 2000. Despite the fact that 95% of the materials commonly found in textiles are either reusable or recyclable, the current share of used clothes and other textiles which are either reused or recycled in the United States remains at only approximately 15%.

“Textiles have been identified as a top material, and the fastest growing category, in residential and commercial waste streams in California. Local governments face costly challenges expanding textile collection and sorting since the materials can absorb, tangle, and combust if mixed into plastic recycling systems,” said Doug Kobold, Executive Director of California Product Stewardship Council, sponsor of SB 707. “The cost burden for managing unusable textiles has fallen on thrifts, collectors, and secondhand markets, while producers keep making products with no plan for what to do with them when they are no longer wearable. California continues to lead by holding producers accountable for planning and funding an ongoing repair and recycling program for managing unusable textiles and apparel.”

The fibers within most clothing items and textiles, if properly sorted and processed, are highly suitable for recycling and repurposing into new products. SB 707 will require producers to implement an end-to-end system to optimize the repair or recycling of textiles, including apparel, accessories, handbags, backpacks, draperies, shower curtains, furnishings, upholstery, bedding, towels, napkins and tablecloths.

Under this program, thrifts and clothing collectors, which have long served as an effective second-hand market for textiles, will be further utilized as collection sites and will also be part of an integrated system for sorting and ultimately recycling used textiles that cannot be reused or resold. “For more than 100 years, Goodwill has been a pioneer of sustainable fashion through the collection of secondhand goods, resale and recycling efforts,” said Nicole Suydam, President & CEO of Goodwill of Orange County and Chair of the California Council of Goodwills. “My Goodwill colleagues across California and I look forward to working in partnership with Senator Newman and the California Product Stewardship Council to accelerate this important work and ensure a more sustainable future for all.”

A leader in recycling models and technologies, California has implemented a number of groundbreaking and effective Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs which reduce waste and environmental harm by placing a shared responsibility for end-of-life product management on the producers and other entities involved across a product’s value chain. SB 707 will apply this proven model to facilitate a transition to a sustainable, market-aligned, circular economy for textiles that will unlock new production and consumption opportunities to the benefit of consumers, industry participants, and the environment.

For more information, visit sd29.senate.ca.gov.